

Lament in Liturgy: A Critical Reflection from an URCSA Perspective

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

South Africa faces many challenges, as a country. Our communities are struggling with many issues such as poverty, inequality, rape, abuse, violence, corruption and many more. Yet, our faith community seems reluctant to lament these issues during their worship services. This research looks specifically at the practice of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

The question that this research wrestles with is: *“Given the challenging times that we live in, in what way could a re-discovery or a re-claiming of lament in liturgy, against the background of healing and hope, obtain new meaning in our congregations?”* The assumption of the research is that if the church wants to be relevant in the lives of their members today, she would need to revisit and reclaim the process of lament in the liturgy. It could further be argued that a re-thinking and a re-introduction of lament in liturgy could have far-reaching and enriching implications in the life of the faith community, especially where the healing of memories is concerned.

Part of the research was a literature study while another section consisted of empirical studies. Congregations from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, in the Western Cape, took part in the studies. The main focus of the research was descriptive-empirical and the information gathered had to be interpreted. Through the normative task, theological reflections could be carried out and finally possible criteria could be deduced in terms of how lament could be re-integrated into existing liturgies of our church.

Opsomming

Suid Afrika word gekonfronteer met baie uitdagings. Ons gemeenskappe gaan gebuk onder geweldige druk en word daaglik gekonfronteer met armoede, ongelykheid, verkragting, mishandeling, geweld, korrupsie en nog vele meer. Ongeag hierdie uitdagings blyk dit asof ons geloofsgemeenskap teensinnig is om te weeklaag gedurende eredienste. Hierdie navorsing kyk spesifiek na die praktyk rondom weeklaag in die liturgie van spesifieke gemeentes in die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika.

Die vraag waarmee hierdie navorsing worstel is: *“Gegewe die uitdagende tye waarin ons lewe, op watter manier kan die herontdekking of die her-besit van weeklaag in liturgie (teen die agtergrond van heling en hoop), nuwe betekenis aanneem in ons gemeentes?”*. Die uitgangspunt van die navorsing is dat as die kerk relevant wil bly in die lewens van haar lidmate, dan het sy nodig om die proses van weeklaag, binne die liturgie, weer te besoek en te eien. Verder kan dit geredeneer word dat ‘n nuwe denkpatroon en ‘n nuwe bekendstelling aan weeklaag in die liturgie verreikende gevolge kan hê in die lewens van die geloofsgemeenskap, veral waar daar na die heling van ons verlede gekyk word.

Een deel van die navorsing was ‘n literêre studie terwyl die tweede deel ‘n empiriese studie was. Gemeentes van die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika het deel uitgemaak van die empiriese navorsing. Die klem van die navorsing was beskrywend-empiries en die data moes interpreteer word. Gedurende die normatiewe deel kon daar teologies gereflekteer word oor die maniere waarop weeklaag weer deel van die bestaande liturgie gemaak kan word in ons kerk. Verskeie moontlikhede het aan die lig gekom in hierdie verband.

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In conclusion, I would like to give glory and honour to God for giving me the strength and for being graceful towards me so that I was able to complete this study, despite many personal challenges - *solī Deo gloria*.

Dedication

To the two men in my life who taught me so much – my late father Jacobus Maggott, and my darling husband Siphosiso.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Title

The title of this research is “*Lament in Liturgy: A critical reflection from an URCSA¹ perspective*”. The aim of this research is to investigate how the process of lament could be revisited and re-incorporated in a practical manner in the liturgy of URCSA. Although the idea is to do this research from the context of URCSA, I am hopeful that it would be useful to the church at large. The context of URCSA was chosen because I am a member of this church, but more importantly because of the effect that the history of our country, in particular the legacy of apartheid, had on relationships in our church and in the Dutch Reformed family of churches. Suffice to say that our relationships, or lack thereof, extend into our everyday lives. In the following section it is important to highlight and explain the key words and key concepts of this dissertation.

1.2. Key words and key concepts

A few key words and key concepts are listed and explained briefly.

1.2.1. Lament

The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary describes lament as “*a passionate expression of grief*” and “*a song, piece of music, or poem expressing grief or regret*”.² The concept of lament cannot be looked at in isolation because what we experience emotionally influences our life in all its facets. Some people might even believe that we can only lament in certain spaces.

¹ Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. URCSA is made up of two churches in the Dutch Reformed family of churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) which was comprised mainly of blacks and the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) which was mainly comprised of coloureds. The two churches united on 14 April 1994 to form URCSA. This unity took place before the South African national elections for democracy on 27 April 1994. A few churches from the Reformed Church in Africa also joined the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. There are distinct cultural differences between these two churches, as described further on in 1.6.

² See Soanes, C. and Stevenson, A. (eds.), 2008. Concise Oxford Dictionary: Eleventh Edition, Revised. New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 2008, 799

Others could be of the opinion that lament is a very private and personal matter, not to be shared openly. Our understanding of the language of hope and lament is quite crucial in understanding this key concept in the research. The renowned South African feminist theologian Denise Ackermann explains lament as follows:

a form of mourning but it is more than that. It is somehow more purposeful and more instinctive than mourning. Lamenting is both an individual and a communal act that signals that relationships have gone awry. While lamenting is about past events, it also has present and future dimensions. It acknowledges the brokenness of the present because of injustice and our role in contributing to the troubles of the world. It instinctively creates a link between healing and mourning that makes new just relationships possible in future.³

These just relationships are sorely needed in our country today where people face many hardships in their everyday lives.

Claus Westermann, on the other hand, brings to our attention the fact that even though lament plays a significant role in the relationship between God and the people in the Old Testament, we need to distinguish between the lament that is caused by pain and suffering and “*the lament of the dead*”.⁴ Both these processes are referred to as “lament” and their outward signs are also the same, namely weeping. However, for Westermann, the distinction between the two is as follows:

- i) In the lament of affliction, the one that suffers voices his/her suffering to a deity and begs that the suffering should be taken away. The lament of affliction looks forward. This action of looking forward signifies a yearning for the “not yet”, that which we hope for.

³ See Ackermann, D. 2001. *Tamar's Cry: Re-reading an ancient text in the midst of an HIV/AIDS pandemic*. London: Russel Press. 2001, 32

⁴ See Westermann, C. 1974. The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament. *Interpretation* 28: 1974, 22

- ii) In the lament of the dead, the lament is uttered by someone who weeps about the death of another. This lament looks backward.⁵

Westermann makes this distinction so that we can understand the theological significance of the lament in the Old Testament.

Lamenting is a process that demands great commitment, honesty and integrity.⁶ It is a process that forces you to become vulnerable before God and your fellow brothers and sisters. Lament is the way in which we deal with the unthinkable. It is a process by which we can be vocal about our hardships, in which individuals and communities, as well as faith communities, can deal with the hardships of life. Lamenting about an issue does not guarantee its immediate solution, but it gives an outlet for the cry of anguish and it allows communities to stand together in solidarity and to make known their brokenness about lamentable issues. For individuals it provides a space in which pain and hurt can be verbalised.

The South African Reformed theologian, Daniël Louw, takes it a step further by arguing that *"lament should be regarded as a kind of legal issue"* in which a person *"appeals to God's justice"*.⁷ This clearly indicates that the process of lament cannot be seen as being passive. Louw continues by giving the basic structural elements of the lament, namely:

- *Addressing God*
- *Objection or protest/accusation*
- *Memories as turning point*
- *Expressing trust*
- *Request and petition*
- *Encouragement and comfort*

⁵ Ibid., 22

⁶ See Brueggeman, W. 1974. From hurt to joy, from death to life. *Interpretation* (28): 1974, 4-5. Brueggemann ponders particularly on how we talk to God. Are we so polite and grateful that we forget to be honest? Do we know how to express our anger and hurt, our feelings of betrayal? We need to be honest and dialogical in our conversations with God.

⁷ See Louw, D.J. 1998. *A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter: A theological design for a basic theory, anthropology, method and therapy*. Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM. 1998, 399

- *Praise*.⁸

This structure⁹ is in line with that used by Claus Westermann in his book *Praise and lament in the Psalms*. However, Westermann's schematic structure is slightly different and he refers distinctly to the lament of the people and the lament of the individual, as this occurs for instance in Psalm 74 and Psalm 13 respectively.¹⁰

Lament of the people	Lament of the individual
Address Introductory Petition	Address, with introductory cry for help and/or turning to God
Lament	Lament (with three subjects: Thou, O God...; I...; the foes...)
Confession of Trust	Confession of trust
Petition (Double Wish ¹¹)	Petition: (a) For God to be favourable (look...incline thyself...hear...); (b) For God to intervene (help...save...)
	Assurance of being heard
	Double wish (hoping God will intervene against... and for...)
Vow of praise	Vow of praise
	Praise of God (only where petition has been answered)

⁸ Ibid., 400-401

⁹ Regardless of the different structures that authors opted for, the undisputed fact is that lament is a process. The healing that people hope for does not necessarily happen overnight. The address to God, the protest, the expression of trust, the comfort received, the praise – all these elements do not necessarily happen in a chronological order. The process of lament is unique to each person or community.

¹⁰ See Westermann, C. 1981. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Tr. K.R. Crim and R.N. Soulen. Edinburg: T.T. Clark. 1981, 52-64

¹¹ The double wish indicates a wish or a petition that goes both ways, namely, asking God to deal with our enemies and also making known a wish for ourselves. Westermann does however indicate that the double wish is rare.

Even though the lament structures are explained as in the above table, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that this is just a framework and that it could have many variations. Westermann alludes to the fact that where the lament of the individual is concerned, the content might not be just the lament and petition of that person. It could be assumed that in some cases a revelation of deliverance was given in the middle of the Psalm and that the Psalm could then also include the words that were given during this revelation.¹² This could be the reason why there is sometimes an abrupt mood change in a Psalm, namely from lament to jubilation.

But Westermann also refers to Gunkel who was of the opinion that the explanation of “*an oracle of salvation*” is not sufficient. Gunkel believed that “*a real change must have taken place in the one speaking*”.¹³ These changes that Gunkel refers to are almost always indicated by a *waw* adversative, namely “But thou O God...” or “But I...”¹⁴

Westermann continues his grammatical observation by explaining the presence of the *we’attah* that is usually translated by “and now” or “but now”. He points out that the contrast created by these constructions is actually made by the structure of the sentence, and not by the *waw*. He gives the example of Ps.13:5 where the *waw* stands with the subject. “*But I – in thy steadfast love I have trusted*”.¹⁵

When the *waw* adversative stands in combination with the subject, at the start of a clause, it is indicative of change taking place. This can be seen clearly where the lament is followed by a “*but*” clause. This movement is normally followed by a confession of trust or “*the assurance of being heard*”.¹⁶ The *but* could therefore be seen as a catalyst for movement to take place, usually from petition to praise within the Psalm of petition.

¹² Ibid., 65

¹³ Ibid., 65

¹⁴ Ibid., 70

¹⁵ Ibid., 71

¹⁶ Ibid., 72

We seem to have lost, to a large extent, our ability to voice our suffering and pain to God. We seem to have lost the ability to give language to the pain and suffering that we are experiencing in our daily lives.¹⁷ Our lives do not only constitute joy and laughter but include issues, and suffice to say this has an impact on our God-image. We have become a society that is so success-driven that the process of lament might be seen as a sign of weakness. And yet, it is important that our faith makes room for both lament and praise because these are the realities with which we are living.

In my opinion, the process of lament cannot be seen in isolation from the processes of healing and hope. Through prayer, we lament before God and this provides a therapeutic realm in which we can move. Our prayers won't always be prayer of praise: often they are full of pain and protest. I agree with Billman and Migliore regarding their understanding of the prayer of lament, when they say that:

it is vital to theology and pastoral ministry today, that it is a profound resource for personal and corporate healing and that it is inseparably related to the capacity for hope and prayer.¹⁸

Lament does not know racial or class boundaries. It touches the lives of everyone. Every person, young or old, cries out in despair at some point in their lifetime to their God. Lament is not even confined to the living. The first cry of lament was heard from someone who had been murdered, hence was already dead. Abel's blood¹⁹ was crying out from the ground to God after he was murdered by his own brother.

¹⁷ See Cilliers, J. 2007. Preaching as language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS. In *Preaching as a language of hope. Studia Homiletica 6*, Cas Vos, Lucy L. Hogan and Johan H. Cilliers (eds.), Pretoria: Pretoria Book House 2007, 158-162

¹⁸ See Billman, Kathleen D. and Migliore, Daniel L. 1999. *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*. Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1999, vii

¹⁹ See *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011. Zondervan: Michigan. Genesis 4:10 reads: The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground."

1.2.2. Liturgy

The Freiburg University New Testament scholar, Ceslas Spicq, states that liturgy²⁰ is the word that is normally used to describe the formal structure of a worship service in Christianity. The South African Reformed theologian, Jurgens Hendriks is of the opinion that liturgy is understood more with the original Greek word “*leitourgia*” in mind, implying a service to the people or nation; a service to the needy world. He continues to say that the liturgy is not only experienced within the walls of our churches but that it is experienced in the world where the congregants are living and witnessing in their daily lives.²¹

We could possibly look at liturgy as ‘words (or silence) in action’. The founding director of the Institute for Liturgical Ministry in Dayton, Ohio, Joyce Ann Zimmerman explains all liturgy as “a ‘remembering’ and celebrating of God’s mighty deeds on our behalf. Liturgical remembering is a way for God to be known and divine events to cast our religious ideals and values”.²² Obviously we do not remember only God’s mighty deeds, or God’s kindness and mercy. We also remember the times that we felt alone and hurt, when it felt as if God had forgotten about us.

Liturgy has many facets that we need to take into consideration. According to the church historian and feminist theologian, Rosemary Ruether, those who are developing the liturgy need to question if what they are proposing actually expresses the meaning of the event.²³ People have different contexts and liturgy needs to be adapted to take these into consideration. We should also bear in mind the people with whom we are dealing. One example that could be mentioned at this stage is the hymnal of our church. My experience is that this hymn book is not gender-sensitive. Some of the symbols used in the songs, as well as the vocabulary, do not include women. The hymn that is sung when the minister

²⁰ See Spicq, C. 1994. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated and edited by James D. Ernest. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1994, 378. *Leitourgia* is described as a “civic or religious (priestly) service”

²¹ See Hendriks, H.J. 1992. *Strategiese beplanning in die gemeente: Die beginsels & praktyk van Gemeentevernuwing*. Wellington: Hugonote Uitgewers. 1992, 109-110

²² See Zimmerman, J. 1993. *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality*. London: Associated University Press. 1993, 5

²³ See Ruether, R. 1985. *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*. San Fransico: Harper & Row Publishers. 1985, 120-121

approaches the pulpit typically acknowledges that it is a man and that God should bless “him” and yet we have quite a few ordained female ministers who are actively involved in the church.²⁴ One can imagine that this could create discomfort for female ministers who are confronted with this situation. Challenging and creating awareness about this gender-sensitive issue remains part of the critical theological questions of this dissertation on lament in liturgy. During the investigation of our liturgies, we would need to look at the languages and symbols which are used in our hymnals, our writings and our rituals.

These days the leadership in churches are hard at work to create the “perfect” worship service experience for their congregants. It is not strange anymore to find a church that has more than one worship service on a Sunday morning, with services varying between being meditative, traditional, contemporary, etc. The congregants are free to attend the one that best suits their needs on that particular day. The Union Chapel minister and feminist theologian, Janet Wootton, describes a service as a *“liturgical journey arising from the interaction between worshippers, scriptural and historical narratives, and the culture or mix of cultures from which the participants come”*.²⁵ This is quite evident in our church with its many cultures.

Having these different kinds of worship services immediately brings questions to the fore but I will not explore these now; I am merely trying to state that liturgy, for the purpose of this research, would refer to the structure of the worship service, from beginning to end.

1.2.3. Symbolism

It is not possible to separate the Christian sacraments from the symbols used in them. The most prominent symbols used in our church are the bread and wine during the Eucharist celebration, and the water in the Baptism font. On other occasions, such as 01 December²⁶,

²⁴ One could argue that the personal pronoun could just be changed to “her” when it is a female minister but congregants still sing “him” regardless of who is standing on the pulpit.

²⁵ See Wootton, J. 2000. *Introducing a Practical Feminist Theology of Worship*. England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd. 2000, 63

²⁶ On this date World Aids Day is celebrated to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS. It provides an opportunity for private and public organisations who partner in the fight against the spread of the virus, to disseminate information. This platform is also used to encourage prevention of the spread of the disease.

the lighting of candles is very prominent. For the purpose of this research I would understand a symbol to be an object that could carry a specific meaning in a particular situation. It is important to note that symbols may have different meanings, depending on the audience observing them. Symbols could be seen as a key to the deeper understanding of hidden realities. The meaning of symbols could sometimes be hidden and even mysterious.

The Mercer Dictionary of the Bible states that “*symbols point, as signs do, but they do more than a sign, they enable the recipient to participate in the mysterious depth to which they point*”.²⁷ The South African Reformed theologian, Dirkie Smit, concur when he says that:

A symbol is something more than just “a sign” of something else. It represents an idea, a truth, a belief, a value, which is regarded by people as extremely important and dear to them. It is the kind of idea or event that can move people to tears; that can inspire them to action that, can quicken their heartbeat.²⁸

Frederick Dillistone refers to the original use of the “root verb *symbollein* in Greek”.²⁹ When an agreement was sealed in ancient Greece, it was customary for the participants to break an object in two. Each party would then keep the one half, as collateral. When the parties wanted to honour the agreement at a later stage, they needed only to identify themselves by showing that their piece of the object was in fact a fit to the object of the other party. The matching done by this act was called *symbollein* and the two pieces of the object were called *symbola*. From this explanation it is clear that a symbol “*connects or brings together*”. In this example the broken pieces were part of the original object and were therefore of the same substance.

For Roger Schmidt, “*a symbol is something that stands for or points to something else*”.³⁰ He continues to explain that some symbols are more familiar than others. Symbols have the

²⁷ See Mills, W. (ed.), 1990. *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*. Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1990, 865

²⁸ See Smit, D.J. 2007. The symbol of reconciliation and ideological conflict in South Africa. In: *Essays in Public Theology, Collected Essays 1, Study Guides in Religion and Theology 12*, In Ernst Conradie (ed.), University of the Western Cape. 2007, 288

²⁹ See Dillistone, F.W. 1986. *The power of symbols*. SCM Press: London. 1986, 14

³⁰ See Schmidt, R. 1980. *Exploring Religion*. Wadsworth Inc.: Belmont, California. 1980, 84

ability to, in some cases, have more than one meaning while others can be linked to one meaning alone. Schmidt also distinguishes between religious symbols:

i) Symbols functioning as a sign

A sign can be connected to what it represents. Thunder and lightning, for instance, indicate an imminent storm. They would therefore constitute a natural sign. Schmidt stresses that the *“reading of signs is an important part of the symbolic process”*.³¹ He alludes further to the fact that in the Christian tradition, signs play quite a significant role.

ii) Representational symbols

These symbols are also referred to as being conventional. Representational symbols are those which through tradition or through their everyday use represent something without really having the qualities that would make the representation logical. *“The meaning of representational symbols is therefore related to their usage”*.³²

iii) Presentational symbols

Presentational symbols are also called *“an image”*³³ by some scholars. These symbols can be understood as symbols that lie closely to the realities that it is trying to present. They can therefore act as a catalyst in unravelling the deeper meaning of a symbol and in bringing this intuitively to the fore.³⁴

Braam Hanekom points out that symbols can even provide a community with an identity, citing the examples of national symbols and family crests. He explains that these symbols bestow a sense of belonging to the people.³⁵ He also makes it clear that symbols do not just give identity but could also be a mechanism through which a community could be understood by others.³⁶ Examples are Jesus in the crib, as well as the cross. Hanekom also

³¹ Ibid., 85

³² Ibid., 87

³³ Ibid., 89

³⁴ Ibid., 89-99

³⁵ These symbols and weapons could also have a negative connotation to people who are not part of the group. Take for example the symbols associated with gangsterism. For this group of people these symbols are a clear sign of where their loyalties lie. However, for the communities, where they are operating, these symbols only serve as a stark reminder of the brokenness of relationships.

³⁶ See Hanekom, A. 1995. *Simbool en ritueel as instrumente vir geloofsvorming*. Unpublished D.Th. dissertation, Stellenbosch University. 1995, 51-62

questions the messages that the symbols used by the Dutch Reformed Church, conveyed during the ages. Some of these symbols are:

- A black suit, white tie and a toga³⁷
- Pews which are reserved for specific families
- Silence in the church
- Specific design style of buildings
- Parsonages
- Pews which are reserved for the church council.³⁸

In summary, it could be said that without using any or many words, symbols can communicate messages to an audience. However, messages which are transmitted in such a manner could easily be misunderstood, so that we need to be sensitive and critical in our choice of symbols. We need to ask constantly what the message is that we want to bring across with the use of a specific symbol. We also need to investigate which symbol would be the most appropriate in a specific context and we need to make sure that the audience understands the meaning of the symbol. It should not create confusion, so that instead of following the liturgy, people are distracted by trying to figure out the meaning of a particular symbol.

1.3. Background and Statement of the Research Problem

I was brought up in URCSA. However, during my formation years I belonged to the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sending Kerk*, which was the church for the so-called coloured people and which united with the larger part of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in April 1994 to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.³⁹ This segregation obviously also had a huge impact on my upbringing and there were many things that I did not understand back then.

³⁷ A black robe which is worn by ministers of religion.

³⁸ Ibid., 61

³⁹ See brief explanation in the introduction.

I have always had this nagging feeling that something was amiss during our Sunday morning services, especially during those times when people would suddenly cry and it would appear as if they are bothering the rest of the congregation. Yet, it would seem to be all right for them to show raw emotion during our Wednesday evening prayers when only a few members of the congregation were present. At these meetings time would be given for the congregants to organise themselves into smaller groups and pray for different issues. It was during these sessions that some people would break down and cry over their personal circumstances. They obviously regarded these sessions as a “safe space” to share their innermost pain, fears and frustrations.

This is quite different to the experience that Leonora Tisdale shares in the book *Making room at the table: An invitation to multicultural worship*. She tells of a congregation with whom she worshiped in her community; a community broken by the drug and alcohol addiction that was prevalent in the area. The congregation goes through a liturgical ritual of lighting candles at the beginning of each service and also reading out loud those people who have requested prayer. But what struck her was the following scenario that played out in the church:

...in each of the pews of this church are packages of tissues, and it is clear that they are not simply intended for children with runny noses! It is the expectation here that people will mourn as well as rejoice when they come to worship, and that tears will be shed as they are brought face to face both with their own shortcomings and with the hope that God alone offers them.⁴⁰

This congregation understood, from first-hand experience, that life does not constitute only joy but that they needed to find a way in which to combine their joy and their pain.

Sadly though, our Sunday morning service seem to be inappropriate for those people who wanted to lament before God and who needed to do it in a communal setting. It seems as if though we always had to have a cheerful spirit because we are Christians. We dared not blame God for things that went wrong in our lives. We are always confronted with the fact

⁴⁰ See Blount, B. & Tisdale, L. (eds.), 2001. *Making room at the table: An invitation to multicultural worship*. Kentucky: John Knox Press. 2001, 184

that our Father is a king and therefore we must be joyful. We could ask anything we wanted because our Father owned the world! Lament seemed to be a process that we should not dwell on because it would expose our weaknesses and our vulnerable state as human beings. And most importantly, it would bring into question the righteousness and fairness of God.

I am of the opinion that our church needs to do more practical work in setting up liturgies, specifically for the process of lament. Our liturgical order takes care of baptisms, the Holy Communion, funerals and weddings and I am of the opinion that we could use these existing liturgies and make more room for the process of lament. The process of lament does therefore not necessarily need to be a separate worship service, but could be incorporated into our existing worship services. Suffice to say that there will be times when a worship service which focuses exclusively on lament, would be needed or requested.

In most cases the Holy Communion is probably synonymous only with confession. However, if we admit in our liturgy that through celebrating the Holy Communion we are reminded what Jesus did for us on the cross and through this celebration, while gathering around the table, our *“lament becomes hope, hope for a new community”*.⁴¹

Lament could be one of the ways in which we deal with the unthinkable; a way in which individuals and communities could deal with the hardships of life. The process of lament could serve as a catalyst in the healing and hope of the people⁴² because our congregants are experiencing major challenges in their lives on a daily basis. Our communities are broken because of the addiction of drugs and alcohol, rape, murder and so many other atrocities. This has a direct effect on the unity and harmony in our families and our churches at large. I am of the opinion that a process of lament in our liturgy could serve as a starting point for our congregants to deal with such issues. It could give them a safe space to mourn and to dream of a new tomorrow; to hope for a better tomorrow. In part 1 of his book *Om te leef asof*

⁴¹ See Cilliers, *Preaching as language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS*. 2007, 172

⁴² See chapter 2 in Elaine Ramshaw's *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, 55-87) for an indepth discussion on how ritual and pastoral care can provide meaning and healing in people's lives. She refers to various rituals that pastors and congregants performed to create positive feelings and meaning, to create assurance at times of death and to provide hope in times of isolation and suffering.

*nie: Meditasies opgedra aan Russel Botman*⁴³, Smit focused his attention on hope and “doing”. He speaks of how Russel Botman⁴⁴ lived a hopeful life; a different life; a life in which he firmly believed that transformation is possible, no matter what the sceptics may say. He always imagined and hoped for a new tomorrow.⁴⁵ Smit continues to wrestle with the issues of being hopeful – inbetween laughter and tears, as well as being hopeful without getting tired or even giving up. In these sections⁴⁶ the author ponders on the paradoxes that we are living in as well as the examples that we find in Scripture. He prophetically concludes that hope does not guarantee any success. However, hope assists us to persevere.

“Wie handel met hoop, doen dit nie vir beloning nie, maar omdat dit ‘n manier van leef is, oortuig van wat ons nóg nie sien nie en dalk nooit eens self gáán sien nie, maar tóg alle moeite werd”.⁴⁷

This is the hope that many are living with in South Africa, specifically against the background of the legacy of apartheid. We need to acknowledge that the legacy of apartheid has caused our people much pain and many of them are still trying to resolve issues from the past and struggling to come to terms with it. In his article titled: *Bearing the pain in our bodies*, in the book *To Remember and to Heal*, Father Michael Lapsley⁴⁸ asked the important question of whether we should not just forget the past. He answered his own question as follows:

For Christians, we need to remind ourselves that we belong to a remembering religion. ‘Remember when you were slaves in Egypt’, is a constant refrain of the Old Testament. The words of Jesus: ‘Do this in memory of me’, are said at every Eucharist.⁴⁹

⁴³ See Smit, D. 2014. *Om te leef asof nie: Meditasies opgedra aan Russel Botman*. Bybelkor: Wellington. 2014, 15-29

⁴⁴ Russel Botman was Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University. He passed away on 28 June 2014.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 16

⁴⁶ Ibid., 19-21

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21 *The one who acts hopeful, does not do it in order to get payment, but is doing it because it is a way of life; being convinced of what we are yet to see – and may even never see – but it is worth all the effort.* [Free translation by the researcher]

⁴⁸ Father Michael Lapsley opened a letter bomb on 28 April 1990 and lost both his hands and an eye.

⁴⁹ See Lapsley, M. 1994. *Bearing the pain in our bodies*. In *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, H. Russel Botman and Robin M. Petersen (eds.), Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1996, 22

In his article *Reformed Churches' Struggle for Justice: Lessons learnt from their submissions before the TRC*, the South African theologian Christo Thesnaar⁵⁰ alluded to the memory of the victims and the perpetrators against the background of their experiences during apartheid. He was specifically referring to the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa with regards to their submissions before the TRC.⁵¹ Thesnaar is of the opinion that in order for “*healing and reconciliation*” to take place, these affected people need to “*remember the past and share it in public with each other*”.⁵² People would need to look anew at what they perceived to be the truth and they would need to deal with this in a manner that would unite them in the “*healing process*” and also assist them to “*form a communal identity*”.⁵³ This links with the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he stated that “*there can be no healing without truth*”.⁵⁴ This process of remembering, and the words of Tutu, really echos the sentiments of this research. Lamenting in liturgy could provide this safe space for people to remember the truth and also to start the process of healing and reconciliation.

It would therefore be very difficult to just forget about our painful past. However, if we could remember our past differently, with the backdrop of the healing of memories, it would allow for much needed growth in our societies. In most cases, the best defence mechanism for survival is to try and forget hurtful things from our past.⁵⁵ It seems easier sometimes to continue with life when these memories stay hidden. However, hidden memories that still cause pain when you reluctantly remember them, need to be brought into the light for healing to take place.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Prof. Christo Thesnaar is a lecturer in Practical Theology – Pastoral Theology at the University of Stellenbosch

⁵¹ The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established by the Government of National Unity. The TRC was tasked to ascertain what happened during apartheid, specifically with regards to the violence and human rights abuses that took place in the country. <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/> (Accessed 27 November 2014)

⁵² See Thesnaar, C. 2013. *Reformed Churches' Struggle for Justice: Lessons learnt from their submissions before the TRC*. In *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990*, Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel and Robert Vosloo (eds.), Stellenbosch: SUN PRESS. 2013:385-386

⁵³ Ibid., 386

⁵⁴ Ibid., 186

⁵⁵ See Anderson, H. “How rituals heal” in *Word & World* 30, 2010 (1): 45-47. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCH OHost (Accessed 15 June 2010)

⁵⁶ For a more indepth discussion on the connection between rituals and narratives, see Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

It is against this background that I am of the opinion that the ritual of lament could assist in this healing process. With every ritual that is constructed and executed in a safe space, a healing of memories takes place. The rituals provide a space for hidden and wounded memories to become part of the present, where they can be named and also become part of our life stories. And in this act the healing of memories can take place. It is thought-provoking when Herbert Anderson alludes to the fact that *“wounds remain even after restoration to new life has occurred”*.⁵⁷ In this instance he refers to the appearance of Jesus to his disciples after He had died and been resurrected. Jesus forbids Mary Magdalene to touch Him but He invites Thomas, the doubter, to touch His wounds. And through this act of touching Thomas is healed from his disbelief. Allowing others to touch your wounds is a sure sign that they are healing.⁵⁸

For Anderson, there needs to be a public element in the healing of rituals. He suggests six aspects in which rituals can enhance healing.

- *“Rituals contain intense emotions we might easily ignore.*
- *Rituals console by bearing witness to the wounds that hurt most and to the traumatic memories that are often beyond words.*
- *Rituals connect people to communities of care and to the earth... God’s healing is the work of restoring and redeeming the whole creation.*
- *Rituals make a correspondence between intense emotions or painful memories and words or images to express those emotions.*
- *Rituals create a safe, holding environment in which to discover that contingency is an inevitable dimension of life because human creatures are fragile and finite.*
- *Rituals foster coherence of meaning in spite of inevitable mystery because the deepest truths of life and faith are hidden in God”*.⁵⁹

Thus Anderson explains that we need to be careful and sensitive when creating public rituals of lament. Some might be impromptu, but most of them need to be carefully planned. The

⁵⁷ See Anderson, “How rituals heal” in *Word & World* 30, 2010 (1): 45

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 46

intense emotions that people might experience could lead to an explosive situation that might have the opposite effect than what was intended, and this could cause more harm in the end.

Flora Keshgegian also commented on the church as a community of remembrance.⁶⁰ She also wrestled with the issue of “*remembering and being a witness of our past*”. She is of the opinion that we could easily become the victim of someone else’s memories. Some of the questions that she struggled with were:

Why were we to remember the past; what past were we to remember; and in what sense was it for the sake of the future? What relationship was ‘right’ between the practice of remembering and my own life choices and practices? What did it mean, as a person of faith, to remember for salvation’s sake?⁶¹

The process of lament could assist to deal with the past as well as the present pain with which survivors are trying to come to terms. Most importantly, it could give them hope for the future. This process of lament should give us a language through which we could voice our suffering. We cannot claim to give our people hope through the message that we bring without going through a process of lament as well.

A minister who takes the time to get to know the congregation will soon discover that unique groups exist within this one community of faith. There are those who are very traditional and are upset if one element of the Sunday morning liturgy is tampered with; then there are those who believe fiercely that it is time for change and they welcome changes in the liturgy; and then there are those who seem not to be bothered by any of this since they are rarely actively involved in the church. Be that as it may, ministers need to understand that they might experience opposition when trying to include lament as a ritual in the congregation. It would be wise to make this a gradual introduction to give congregants a chance to adjust.

⁶⁰ See Keshgegian, F. A. 2000. *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2000, 200-201

⁶¹ Ibid., 15

Elaine Ramshaw warns pastors not simply to assume that congregants are rigid when they oppose liturgical change.⁶² People get accustomed to the way in which things are done and hold on to what is known in a world that is forever changing. Ramshaw therefore also advises that “*the introduction of change in ritual practice must be gradual and respectful of the need for continuity of practice*”.⁶³ We need to be sympathetic towards those congregants who are struggling to embrace this change in liturgy. We should be patient and give them time to adjust to this new way of doing things and simultaneously understand their need for continuity in their ritual practice.

The problem that this research is grappling with is the decline, and in many instances, the exclusion of lament in our liturgies. Cilliers also struggles with the fact that we do not lament anymore. His argument is as follows:

if we contend that preaching is a language of hope, we will have to relearn the language of lament. There can be no language of hope without language of lament: they are flipsides of the same coin.⁶⁴

I am in total agreement with Cilliers. People need to deal first with their suffering, and in the suffering they should be able to “see” the hope of the “not yet”. This is a process and it cannot be forced. We find instances in the Old Testament where God’s people are lamenting before God. It was part of the way that they worshipped. Why then are we of the opinion that our relationship with God should constitute only praise? Why are we as Christians so hesitant to lament before God – specifically in our worship services?

1.4. Research question and hypothesis

1.4.1. Research Question

The research question could be formulated as follows:

⁶² See Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. 1987, 22-25

⁶³ Ibid., 25

⁶⁴ See Cilliers, *Preaching as language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS*. 2007, 159

Given the challenging times that we live in, in what way could a re-discovery or a re-claiming of lament in liturgy, against the background of healing and hope, assume a new meaning in our congregations?

It appears as if lament is not at the forefront of our worship services anymore. We are acutely aware of thanksgiving, praise, confession, petition and intercession in our prayers during worship services but we seem to neglect or even ignore the prayer of lament. This has far-reaching consequences in our lives as individuals and as a faith community at large.

South Africa is facing many challenges. It is not strange to hear reports via the media of the rape of young children, women and even babies; women and children are abused on a daily basis. The Director of UNAIDS, Catherine Sozi, is adamant that *“we need more than a prayer”* in our response to the wave of sexual violence in our country.⁶⁵ She admits that statistics show a positive picture with regards to the decrease of HIV infections. Regardless of this, Sozi is still deeply concerned about *“our actions”*.⁶⁶ She continues to propose that:

the church is systematically weak/absent in responding to the reality of sexual violence, both in a preventative sense and in after-care. And as such congregations are actively creating a context in which sexual violence survivors are stigmatised and discriminated against, and in which sexually violent practices are condoned.⁶⁷

To illustrate the reason for her proposition, Sozi shared an experience she had at a traditional ceremony in the Eastern Cape. During the ceremony a teenage girl revealed that she was being repeatedly raped by her uncle. The girl and her mother turned to their church for support but they felt that they were being blamed for the incident. They had the same experience at the police and in court. It is against this background that Sozi strongly believes that *“it takes more than a prayer to heal and empower girls and women who have endured sexual*

⁶⁵ See C. Sozi, 2013. More than a prayer: Your response to sexual violence and HIV, Johannesburg 2013, 1-8. Unpublished Paper. This paper was read at the Consultation of the Church Leaders on the 15 October 2013 in Johannesburg and is available at the office of the National Religious Association for Social Development on request.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2

*violence – to transform them from victims to survivors. It takes compassionate leadership that reaches beyond scripture and traditional rites and teachings”.*⁶⁸

People are living with violence in their neighbourhoods and it has become “normal”. It is as if our country has entered a stage of denial. Cilliers articulates this silence as follows:

... the syndrome of silence is typical of the conventional functioning of public life. In most public spheres we are required to adopt the language of equilibrium; the raw edges of suffering and chaos must be suppressed or denied in order to ensure ‘safety and security’.⁶⁹

These challenges and denials are not unique to South Africa as many other countries in Africa are also struggling with similar issues such as gender-based violence and rape. In the book titled *Justice Not Silence: Churches Facing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*⁷⁰, it becomes clear that the church is facing a huge theological challenge with regards to gender-based violence. In their article *Silent Cry? Gender Relations in the African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha in Zimbabwe*, Richard Maposa and Fortune Sibanda makes reference to the gender relations in the African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha. Women who have delivered babies or who are menstruating are seen to be unclean and are therefore prohibited from attending church services or from sharing the matrimonial bed. They are even forbidden to cook and do other domestic chores during this period of *uncleanliness*.⁷¹ This clearly shows how women are excluded from participation in their church and at home.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3

⁶⁹ See Cilliers, *Preaching as language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS*. 2007, 158

⁷⁰ This book highlights the fact that the issue of gender-based violence is not high on the agenda of the church. Although the church often stands up for issues of human rights, economic justice, etc. sexual and gender-based violence does not really receive the attention it rightfully deserve. The church is challenged to look at these issues anew and to make it part of its mission. The issue of sexual and gender-based violence is looked at under the rubric of three themes. Firstly, the challenge is looked at in different contexts within the church. Secondly, the realities of sexual and gender-based violence in churches are investigated and thirdly it challenges the churches’ response to this important issue. Practical guidance in the form of proposed liturgies and exegesis of sermons are also included in some articles. The articles in this book clearly show that churches need to recognise that addressing the issue of violence is integrally part of their calling.

⁷¹ See Maposa, R. and Sibanda, F. 2013. *Silent Cry? Gender Relations in the African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha in Zimbabwe*. In *Justice Not Silence: Churches Facing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*. Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA. 2013, 100-102

The above situation could trigger the following questions: Is the church really a safe space for these women who are rejected and excluded in their families as well as the in church? In their particular situation, how can the church become a safe space where they can lament? How can the process of healing be triggered through this liturgical lament? These questions are in line with the research question of this study. This example challenges the church anew to see how she can practically be of service to the people.

In their article, *The Anglican Diocese of Manicaland (Zimbabwe) Mother's Union addressing Gender-based violence: The TAMAR Campaign*, Charles Chindomu and Eunice Matizamhuka shows how a group of women actually did exactly what Sozi was referring to when she said that we need more than a prayer to address the atrocities in our societies. This Mother's Union launched the TAMAR campaign in 2011. Through this campaign they endeavoured to "empower women and churches...to break the chains of silence regarding physical, spiritual, mental and verbal abuse of women and in fact all forms of gender violence".⁷² The Mother's Union also provided additional strategies of how the church could practically become involved in the fight against gender-based violence.

In the cited articles, the examples of the AIDS pandemic and how it could be fuelled by gender-based violence are used. However, reclaiming the language of lament could serve as a catalyst for the healing process of our people in many spheres of our lives. The outcry during lament does not necessarily only have to be the challenges we are facing with HIV and Aids.

⁷² See Chindomu, C. and Matizamhuka, E. 2013. The Anglican Diocese of Manicaland (Zimbabwe) Mother's Union addressing Gender-based violence: The TAMAR Campaign. In *Justice Not Silence: Churches Facing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*. Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA. 2013, 175-178

1.4.2. Research Hypothesis

The appropriate role of lament in the liturgy of URCSA will make the church more relevant in the lives of her members and bring a message of hope and healing to the community.

People go to church for various reasons. Some have a deep need for communion, others have fallen into the pattern of going because “it is Sunday morning and we see it as a duty to be in church”, while others might go in case they are surprised by the message of the minister. In his book, *Worship come to its senses*, Don Saliers talks about the four features that we could experience or might experience during a worship service. These are

- i) the sense of awe,
- ii) the sense of delight,
- iii) the sense of truth and
- iv) the sense of hope.

He makes it clear that we can be so caught up in our duties that it results in the following:

we miss one of the most essential features of vital worship: sheer delight – delight in God, in one another, and in the very means by which common life is graced. Obligation, custom and ‘the way we’ve always done it obscure the delight. Hence we suffer a diminished liturgy and life together.⁷³

It goes without saying that we find a sense of belonging in our tradition. However, we need to reform constantly to be a welcoming community of faith. It is true that we are not always in the mood to go to church. We might be so depressed by challenges that we would rather do anything else but go to church. The church might even be the cause of our depression. Saliers also recognizes the exclusion that some people might experience in a community of

⁷³ See Saliers, D. 1996. *Worship come to its senses*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1996, 33

faith.⁷⁴ It is against this background that we always need to re-think what it is that we keep ourselves busy with as a faith community. How do we treat each other? Do we reach out across boundaries? Do we challenge the cultural divisions in our society? Are we a welcoming faith community in our liturgies? Is the set-up in our church welcoming to those who have physical disabilities? And if it is not, what are we doing to change this?

1.4.3. Could the Holy Communion help us in our re-thinking process?

I believe that the celebration of the Holy Communion could act as a catalyst for addressing the decline of lament in liturgy. The South African Reformed Feminist theologian, Anlené Taljaard, proposes that the *“Eucharist could become the middle space where believers meet and where time and dialogue are transformed”*.⁷⁵ Around the table we meet as equals; a place where we are equally vulnerable. We are bound together in Christ, through the cross, and this would be the focus of the moment but it will also continue to be the focal point in the future.

The Reformed Theologian, Nico Koopman, argues that in essence the church has an embedded trinitarian and anthropological vulnerability. The expression of this vulnerability is found in the example that we have of our Lord Jesus Christ. He served in humility, died on the cross and was resurrected. Through the suffering of Jesus we see that God does not stand aloof from human beings but that God identifies with our suffering.⁷⁶ The church consists of vulnerable people. People might keep a front in order to protect themselves, but ultimately *“vulnerability is part of the essence of being human”*.⁷⁷ He further alluded to the fact that *“a vulnerable church is a faithful church, and therefore, a relevant church”*.⁷⁸ And it is because of this faithfulness and relevance that the church does not have any other option but to be present in a tangible manner in the lives of her members.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 37-38

⁷⁵ See Taljaard, A. 2004. Die nagmaal as middelruimte tussen ryk en arm gelowiges om sigbaarheid aan versoening in the samelewing te gee. *NGTT* 45 (2): 2004, 373

⁷⁶ See Koopman, N. 2008. Vulnerable Church in a Vulnerable World? Towards an Ecclesiology of Vulnerability. In *Journal of Reformed Theology Volume 2*. Brill, The Netherlands. 2008, 241

⁷⁷ Ibid., 244

⁷⁸ Ibid., 240

By celebrating the Holy Communion we do not only lament, but are also hopeful for a process of healing. It is a place where we hope for forgiveness, and through this forgiveness relationships are healed. In proposing the celebration of the Holy Communion as a catalyst for addressing the decline of lament in liturgy I also need to be realistic about the number of times that we are able to celebrate the Holy Communion in our church. Many of our churches do not have a presiding minister, a situation which results in the celebration of the Holy Communion taking place only a few times a year when a visiting minister is present. This in itself is not a healthy situation because these congregations are essentially prohibited from celebrating Holy Communion and this could have far-reaching consequences for the relationships in the church. There are often candidate ministers present in these congregations, but because they have not been ordained as ministers, they are not allowed to administer this sacrament.

One wonders whether we are not keeping ourselves hostage as a church in the way that our church order stipulates certain issues. The leadership of our church is quite aware of the fact that most of our congregations would probably remain without a full-time minister due to financial constraints. Should we not look at alternative methods to assist these congregations to be in a position where they are able to celebrate Holy Communion on a regular basis? Should we not revisit the authority that candidate ministers have in terms of the tasks that they are able to perform in our congregations?

I am of the opinion that the Holy Communion is not only a reminder of what the Lord has done for us on the Cross but it is also an important element in our healing process. If we look at the challenges that we are facing today in South Africa and in our communities at large, I believe that the church should provide everything possible to give our people hope for the future. The worship service can provide so much for our people. In his article “*Why Worship: Revisiting a Fundamental Liturgical Question*”,⁷⁹ Cilliers wrestles with the motive and intention of worship, and considers these fundamental liturgical questions via four liturgical tensions, namely:

⁷⁹ See Cilliers, J. 2009. Why worship? Revisiting a fundamental liturgical question. *HTS Theological Studies* 65 (1):1-6

- i) between being and becoming
- ii) between time and space
- iii) between awe and expression and
- v) between laughter and lament.

Cilliers mentions the work of some authors who also address these tensions: Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Moltmann, Tillich, Otto, Bakhtin and Buber. However, he makes it clear that these were not the only authors that addressed the issues but this is the selection that he made for the purpose of the specific article.

A brief summary follows the first three liturgical tensions.

➤ **Between being and becoming**

Within worship there is a consciousness of *being*. For Cilliers this sense of self-discovery needs to be nurtured during worship. Cognisance must be taken of the being-functions and the understanding should be that these functions cannot be manipulated or controlled. Cilliers emphasises that these being-functions are in fact “*part and parcel of the ‘event of the liturgical encounter’ between God and human beings*”.⁸⁰

The second part of this tension is on *becoming*. The process of *becoming* cannot stand in isolation of the Christian hope. Cilliers describes it clearly when he mentions that the “*Christian hope therefore is not only becoming what I should be, but at the same time also being what I am already!*”⁸¹ Hence, if my behaviour is not in line with what society would expect then *being what I am already* could be a stumbling block in my day-to-day interaction with people. However, when talking against the background of the “*Christian hope*” one would assume that the foundation has been laid and that *being what I am already* would be in line with Christian norms and values.

➤ **Between time and space**

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2

⁸¹ Ibid., 2

Time and space influences every being. Our total existence happens between time and space. Cilliers refers to the Old and New Testament where God's actions in history are explained with the help of "*linear time categories*".⁸² He stresses that we worship the God of history. However, this God of the past is also the God of the present and the God of the future. God cannot be boxed into a spatial cocoon.

➤ Between awe and expression

Cilliers quotes Schleiermacher who was of the opinion that "*worship begins when a human being knows 'I am'*".⁸³ However, this understanding of "*I am*" is not an individualistic experience but rather takes place in close association with others. When approaching God in our worship, we experience a total feeling of awe and mystery that can scarcely be explained verbally. But for Cilliers, this tension that is experienced should in fact be expressed in one form or another. The use of metaphorical language is one way in which this experience of awe could be explained. Through the use of metaphorical language, new insights could be obtained in trying to explain the awe and mystery experienced in the presence of God. For Cilliers, "*liturgy could be called the oscillation between awe and expression*".⁸⁴

If we are unable then to verbalise this awe it could have far-reaching effects for worship as a whole. If we lose the awe and mystery our worship services would not have the same meaning anymore. It is important to Cilliers that "*awe and mystery must be translated metaphorically in such a manner that liturgy becomes the liturgy of (everyday) life*".⁸⁵ In such a situation people might be more at ease to participate in lament in liturgy. When liturgy becomes an everyday occurrence, incorporating lament into liturgy might be much more meaningful for our faith communities, assisting us in realising that, as a faith community and as a country, we have much to lament about.

⁸² Ibid., 3

⁸³ Ibid., 3

⁸⁴ Ibid., 3

⁸⁵ Ibid., 4

1.4.4. Laughter and lament?

Laughter and lament! It immediately brings questions to the fore. How can you say these words in one sentence? Cilliers explains that an eschatological tension exists “*between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’*” and this tension could also be “*understood as a tension between celebration (or laughter) and lament*”.⁸⁶ He continues to explain that we are only able to understand this tension within the “*theological framework of hope*”.⁸⁷ The fact that we are hopeful does not mean that our suffering and conflict are not real, or that they are even lessened. Our hope is rooted in our resurrected Lord and Saviour and this gives us the strength to carry on despite our circumstances.

Cilliers wrestles with the meaning of lament, the celebration of God’s future in the “already” and the “not yet”. For him, “*besides lamenting, we also need to embrace a theology of laughter*”.⁸⁸ As Christians we cannot stay focused just on lament and suffering. We also need to see a better future for ourselves and our children because we are looking forward to the “not yet”. We believe that the resurrected Jesus has given us hope for the future. So despite the stark reality of our circumstances, we hold on to this hope, this new tomorrow. Therefore, this hope needs to be celebrated despite the fact that we are still lamenting because of the injustices of this world.

In a world full of pain we need the liberation of laughter. As a matter of fact, what we sorely need is not only lamenting, but also laughter. Lament and laughter are closer to one another than one tends to think; they are two sides of the same coin. Laughter and lament complement one another.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid., 4

⁸⁷ Ibid., 4

⁸⁸ Ibid., 4

⁸⁹ Ibid., 4

1.5. Demarcation of the research

This research was done from the perspective of URCSA. The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa consists of various cultural groups and it would therefore do justice to the research if a number of these groups were included. In the Western Cape we have Afrikaans-speaking congregations as well as congregations where a mixture of Xhosa and Sotho is spoken. Obviously we also have congregations that function in different socio-economic situations. All these factors were taken into account.

1.6. Research design and research method

This investigation was done in the subject discipline of Practical Theology as it ties in with the subdisciplines of Practical Theology. Practical Theology can be understood as a “critical, theological reflection in the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world”.⁹⁰

Richard Osmer⁹¹, ordained Presbyterian minister and Professor of Mission and Evangelism, explains that we can understand Practical Theology in four key questions and tasks, namely:

- i) The Descriptive-empirical task (*gathering of information to understand patterns and dynamics through priestly listening -- “what is going on?”*)
- ii) The Interpretive task (*drawing on other disciplines, i.e. anthropology, psychology, etc. with sage wisdom -- “why is it going on?”*)
- iii) The Normative task (*using theological concepts -- “what should be going on?”; theological reflection, finding ethical principles, exploring past and present practices of the Christian tradition using prophetic discernment*) and
- iv) The Pragmatic task (*determining strategies of action through servant leadership -- “how should we respond?”*).

⁹⁰ See Swinton, J. and Mowat, H. 2006. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press. 2006, 6

⁹¹ See Osmer, R. 2008. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2008, 4

These tasks normally “take place in preaching, pastoral care, evangelism, spirituality, Christian education, and other ministerial practices”.⁹² These questions and tasks are in constant conversation with each other and could be depicted as follows:

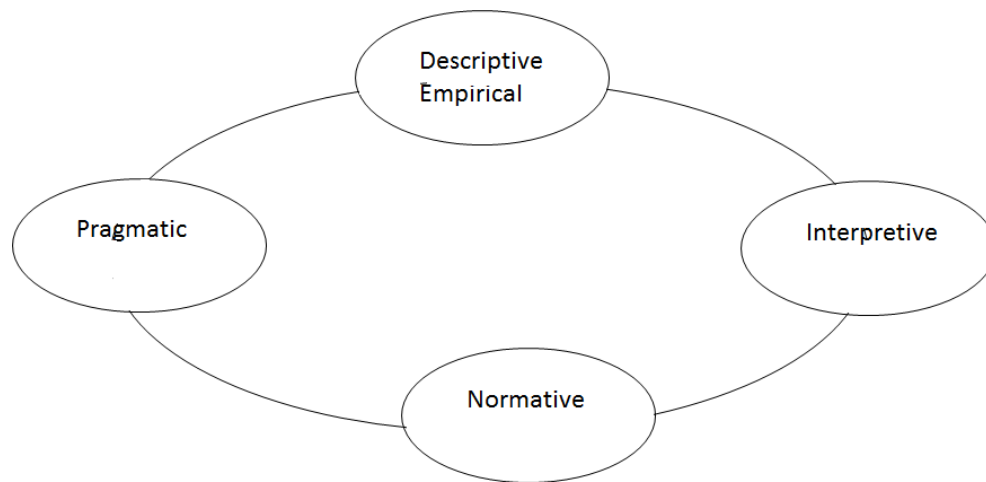


Figure 1: The Four Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation. Source: Osmer 2008:11

Given the fact that we have different cultural groups in our church, the “what is going on?” question in the descriptive-empirical task allows for an investigation that is done in a certain spiritual context. This is much more than just collecting information. It requires us to grapple with the issue of our understanding of spirituality in general, and African spirituality in particular. It also necessitates an attempt to reflect on how Africans deal with the issue of lament in liturgy. Defining African spirituality is not an easy task. Africans are fundamentally “*communal and relational*” beings and their lives can therefore not be separated into compartments.⁹³ Through our spirituality we are connected to God, our fellow human beings and the whole of creation. This connectedness takes on special meaning when it is looked at through the lense of *Ubuntu*.⁹⁴ For Cilliers culture, identity and spirituality are

⁹² Ibid., 13

⁹³ See Bellagamba, A., 1987. New Attitudes towards Spirituality. In Shorter, A et al eds., *Towards African Christian Maturity*, Kampala: St. Paul Publications, 107

⁹⁴ A traditional African saying that is translated as “a person is a person through other persons”. This concept is further explained in 5.9.

intrinsically intertwined in African worship services.⁹⁵ And this finds extension in the manner in which Africans participate in worship services. Their bodily expressions are more spontaneous in comparison with their Western counterparts. Worship does not take place in isolation – the whole body participates.⁹⁶ Our most intimate experiences in life are best expressed not by words alone but also through the art of music, a combination of words and sound. As Africans, this should not be strange to us. When we face hardships, we sing. When we are happy, we sing! And when we have experienced the loss of a loved one through death, we lament through singing. Singing is part of our being.⁹⁷

In a sense, as a faith community we are challenged to develop a spirituality of (bodily) presence in our worship services.⁹⁸ This will also enable us to be “tuned-in” spiritually so that we are able to attend “to others in their particularity and otherness within the presence of God”.⁹⁹ Developing this spirituality of presence will be a key ingredient if we want people to be free to lament in liturgy. In this sense, the research into the two “spiritualities” represented in URCSA, could prove to be helpful, in particular in re-learning the importance of our bodies, also in expressing lament.¹⁰⁰

Due to the continuous interaction between the tasks proposed by Osmer, the researcher is hopeful that it would change the way in which lament in liturgy is dealt with in

⁹⁵ See Cilliers, JH 2008. Worshipping in the Townships – a case study for Liminal Liturgy? *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. No 132: 72-85

⁹⁶ Ibid., 74

⁹⁷ Various films have been produced telling the story of Apartheid in South Africa. One film that specifically comes to mind is *Sarafina*. It centres around the lives of students in the Soweto riots. These riots erupted when students opposed the implementation of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools. Throughout the challenges they faced, these students were singing, and the lyrics of the songs articulated the pain, hope, fear and suffering that they were experiencing. It was a way in which they could express what they were going through. Singing is also used during marches and protests. It mobilises people in a special way and provides a united front in their fight for a cause.

⁹⁸ It has often been said that Protestant worship services are sometimes so inclined to be centred on the act of (cognitive) preaching, and that the latter deteriorates into a lecture with mere liturgical addenda – without much bodily action or response. One could probably describe many Protestant services, even today, in the words of JF White: “the most cerebral of the Western traditions... prolix and verbose... overwhelmingly cerebral.” JF White, *Protestant Worship Traditions*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 58. Would it be too daring to say that one “spirituality” in URCSA tends to lean towards such a tradition – keeping in mind that there are also different nuances and “mixtures” in both these “spiritualities”? That we therefore need both spiritualities, and should be reciprocally open to one another, particularly also in regard to the research question of this thesis, i.e. to re-learn the liturgical act of lament?

⁹⁹ See Osmer, R. 2008. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2008, 33-34

¹⁰⁰ Cf. McGann, M.E. “Timely wisdom, Prophetic challenge: Rediscovering Clarence RJ Rivers’ vision of effective Worship”, *Worship* 76, no1 (2002), 2-24, for a detailed discussion of the importance of the body in African spirituality and worship services.

congregations. Hopefully, during this research, and also afterwards, congregants will be attracted to think about the absence of lament in their liturgies. It might even serve to encourage us to think more actively about what is happening in our liturgies at church.

Part of this investigation was carried out by means of a literature study. The study made use of a literature approach and looked at different scholarly views related to the proposed theme of study.¹⁰¹ The comment has been made previously that lament has to a large extent disappeared from our liturgy in URCSA. Against this background it was necessary to also include an empirical research methodology. The biggest part of the research was done with a qualitative approach. The questionnaire, which formed part of the final stages of the research, employed a quantitative approach. Various tools for data collection were used namely direct observation, tape recordings, unstructured interviews and questionnaires.

David Silverman, a professor of Sociology, explains the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods as follows: “*Quantitative methods are usually the most appropriate if you want to find out social facts or the cause of some phenomenon. Qualitative methods are best suited if you want to ask ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions*”.¹⁰² Silverman continues to explain that words as well as numbers are used in quantitative methods, i.e. verbal interpretations of statistical data is normally provided. Both qualitative and quantitative research are interested in the behaviour of people.¹⁰³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat is of the opinion that it is difficult to comprehensively address the definition of qualitative research in one sentence. However, for the sake of orientation they make use of the definition of Denzin and Lincoln who defined qualitative research as follows: “*Qualitative research is a multi-method focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative research study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them*”.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ See Mouton, J. 2001. *How to succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. 2001, 197-180

¹⁰² See Silverman, D. 2011. *Interpreting Qualitative Data. 4th Edition*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2011, 25

¹⁰³ Ibid., 4

¹⁰⁴ See Swinton, J. and Mowat, H. 2006. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press. 2006, 29

In essence, qualitative research tries to examine the social settings that people find themselves in, in order to ascertain the meaning that people attach to their surroundings – and in the case of this research, the meaning and occurrence of lament in the existing liturgy. The qualitative research methodology is therefore primarily used to examine, collect and draw conclusions around the question of the occurrence of lament in the liturgy and providing guidelines on how to incorporate lament in the liturgy if it is lacking.

Many debates about qualitative and quantitative research methods exist. For some researchers these methods are seen as entirely separate while others have no qualms about mixing the two strategies within their research.¹⁰⁵ Blaxter makes it clear that making “*use of questionnaires as a research technique might be seen as a quantitative strategy*” while “*interviews and observations might be thought of as qualitative techniques*”. This is however not so clearcut in practise.¹⁰⁶ She continues to emphasise that there is a “*close relationship between qualitative and quantitative forms of research*” because both make use of “*four main techniques for collecting data – documents, interviews, observations and questionnaires*”.¹⁰⁷ These data collecting techniques could evolve into qualitative or quantitative elements, or even both.

The study was dealt with in three sections within which the four phases of Osmer are integrated. **Firstly**, it focused on the descriptive-empirical task by ascertaining what is happening in our liturgies regarding the process of lament, i.e. has lament been ignored or has it even disappeared from our liturgies in URCSA. It then goes further by looking at the interpretive task that asks the question “why is it going on”. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with this task. In other words, Osmer’s descriptive-empirical task and the interpretive task are attended to in Chapters 1 and 2.

Secondly, the normative task is investigated through theological reflections. The chapters pertaining to this task are chapters 3, 4 and 5.

¹⁰⁵ See Blaxter, Loraine. *How To Research* (4th Edition). Berkshire, GBR: McGraw-Hill Education, 2010. ProQuest ebrary. 2010, 65 (Accessed 20 November 2014).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 65

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 185

In the **third** part of the study, ways of re-visiting and re-integrating lament in our liturgies today will be explored. In other words, Osmer's pragmatic task is dealt with in chapter 6.

Chapter 7 provides the concluding remarks for the research.

The interpretation of Osmer will allow the researcher to look at the issues in a practical, chronological and realistic manner. It will provide guidance in the testing of the hypothesis of this research.

1.6.1. Selection of congregations

As mentioned before, the research was done in various congregations in URCSA. These congregations are all within a specific geographical area in Cape Town in the Western Cape and they also consist of different cultural groups. One motivation for the selection of this specific geographical area is the fact that is representative of different cultures and religions and therefore gives insight into the South African culture in general, as well as opening up the possibility of a collaborative re-learning of lament, as argued above.¹⁰⁸ People in different contexts tend to have a unique way in which they worship. They would therefore not necessarily share the same experience regarding lament in liturgy in their worship services. Congregations, who represent the different cultural groups in our church that were initially approached, were:

- Kraaifontein (Eikendal)
- Kraaifontein (Scottsdene)
- Mfuleni
- Stellenbosch (Idas Valley)

However, even though the leadership of most of these congregations indicated their willingness to participate, obtaining the official permission letters did not materialise. Also, a few congregations never even responded to the invitation to be part of the research. This

¹⁰⁸ A similar ethnographic study, with similar arguments for choosing congregations within the Western Cape, was done by Cas Wepener: *Van vas tot fees: 'n Ritueel-liturgiese ondersoek na versoening binne Suid-Afrikaanse kultuurkontekste*. Unpublished DTh, University of Stellenbosch, 2004. In his study, Wepener concentrated on the issue of rituals of reconciliation.

provided quite a challenge to the researcher and in the end a selection had to be made and the congregations chosen was the ones who not only showed a keen interest in the theme of the research, but they were also the ones who provided the researcher with the necessary permission letters as well. These congregations were accessible and it was also cost-effective in terms of the number of site visits that had to be made. The congregations that participated in the research are situated within a 50km radius from where the researcher is staying. One of the participating congregations was a Xhosa-speaking congregation and this would provide insight into a different style of worship. The other participating congregations were Afrikaans speaking. The research required numerous site visits for the purpose of observation¹⁰⁹, especially on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, and therefore it made logistical and financial sense to do the research in these congregations.

1.6.2. Pilot Study

An attempt was made to do a pilot study. However, the researcher learnt first hand what Huysamen warned against when it became clear that although people seemed interested in the theme of the research, the will to actually go through processes were not there.¹¹⁰ The intention of a pilot study is to do research on a limited number of subjects on the same population that will participate in the eventual project. The purpose for the pilot study is to investigate the “feasibility of the proposed project and to detect possible flaws” that might hamper the investigative procedure.¹¹¹

The researcher made contact with different congregations and got permission from the ministers to have initial contact sessions with different groups at the church. The information sessions took place at the gatherings of the different organisations of the church, namely the Christian Women’s Ministry (CWM), the Christian Youth Ministry (CYM) and the Youth Brigade. The idea was to have formal and semi-structured interviews at a later stage, after permission has been obtained from the ethical committee, with everyone concerned.

¹⁰⁹ See 1.6.2.1 for a more detailed description.

¹¹⁰ See Huysamen, G.K. 1994. *Methodology for the social and behavioural sciences*. International Thomson Publishing (South Africa): Goodwood. 1994,197

¹¹¹ Ibid., 197

At these sessions an explanation was provided regarding the research. Even though quite a few people, young and old, verbalised their excitement about such a project in their congregation they were reluctant to commit themselves and cited time constraints as a reason. Upon further discussions with the ministers the researcher learnt that it is quite a challenge to get people back at church after the Sunday morning service. The active members only attend the meetings of the different organisations that they belong to. Another challenge is that these congregations are not normally part of a research process and so this is a new experience for them. Because some are not familiar with this academic process they might be fearful to participate.

This created a major challenge for the researcher with regards to doing a pilot study as well as how the data component of the research will be dealt with. How could data be obtained from a group of people who are clearly excited about the theme of the research but who are not able to commit themselves to a lengthy process of research? After carefully considering different options, and also speaking to the ministers and my supervisor, it became clear that there needed to be a change in the methodology.

In the research problem and hypothesis section of chapter 1, the question is asked whether the Holy Communion could possibly assist in our re-thinking the process of lament. The researcher wished to determine whether including lament in the liturgy, of specifically Holy Communion, could act as a *catalyst* in this process. At the table we are together as a vulnerable people, remembering what our Lord has done for us. It is a place where we receive forgiveness for our sins, our hearts are healed and in the process our bodies also receives healing. It is therefore a place where we are hopeful for what we dream, the *not yet*.

At the beginning of the research, before the theme was born, people would be confused when they heard what the researcher was working on. It always required some explanation to make the theme more understandable. Against this background, it was decided to incorporate a questionnaire session at a sermon where lament would be addressed. The sermon focused on lament and showed how symbols could be incorporated at the Holy Communion table, specifically to draw attention to the hurt that people are experiencing in their daily lives. The

same sermon was preached at all the participating congregations. The focus text was Psalm 13 and much attention was given to the meaning of personal and communal lament. See 4.3 for an exegesis of the sermon. The sermon culminated in the celebration of the Holy Communion. The researcher introduced symbols¹¹² at the table, to illustrate further how we could lament in our existing liturgies.

The researcher did this with the approval of the presiding minister and church council. The minister also approved the liturgy. The questionnaire would then be completed straight after the sermon, when the information was still fresh, and more importantly when people were still at the church. It was also important to do observations during other Sunday morning services as well in order to establish whether lament in liturgy actually features in these congregations.

It was important to streamline the interviewing questions to make sure the right questions were asked in order to get optimal data. The researcher approached the Centre for Statistical Consultation at the University of Stellenbosch to assist with the proper statistical design. The interviewing questions were refined to allow for the extraction of biographical information, opinions, beliefs and convictions.¹¹³

The idea of interviewing small target groups was abandoned. It appeared to make more sense to get the input of people when they are already at church. This would take care of the challenge of the time constraints. Instead of interviewing small groups a decision was taken to rather invite people to complete a questionnaire after a Sunday morning service but also to interview the ministers of the participating congregations so that they could share their understanding and experiences of lament in liturgy. The majority of members normally attend Sunday morning services. In order to give as many people as possible the opportunity to participate in the research, it made sense to have the questionnaire session immediately after the Sunday morning service. The research question was explained during a Holy

¹¹² See Addendum B and Addendum C for an illustration of the use of these symbols.

¹¹³ Ibid., 128-133

Communion service. The celebration of the Holy Communion would put emphasis also on “the healing and hope” that the research question refers to.

The researcher is of the opinion that the theme of this dissertation is very relevant, not just to our church but also to the academic field. It was therefore not an option to cancel this research project because the pilot study did not occur the way that it was conceptualised. The researcher rather opted to change the methodology (as explained above).

1.6.3. Data collection techniques

The following data collection techniques were used during the research:

1.6.3.1. Direct Observation

A period of time was spent with the various congregations to gain experience of how they incorporate lament in liturgy in their worship services, if at all. The researcher observed this behaviour by means of direct observation. A distinction is made between direct observation and participant observation. Firstly, during direct observation the observer does not “*typically try to become a participant in the context*”¹¹⁴ but instead they try to be discreet so that they do not form a preconceived notion of the observations. Secondly, a more detached perspective is suggested. The researcher will be watching instead of watching and taking part. Thirdly, the observation tends to be “*more structured than participant observation*”.¹¹⁵ And finally, direct observation does not normally take as long as participant observation. During the observation the researcher would look specifically for verbal and non-verbal cues of lament that is used in the liturgy.

Hendriks points out that direct observation “*perceives, records, reflects and reports*”.¹¹⁶ Field notes were documented throughout the period.¹¹⁷ Bailey¹¹⁸ also makes it quite clear that observation

¹¹⁴ See Trochim, W. and Donnelly, J (eds.), 2008. *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Third Edition. Mason, Ohio: Atomic Dog/Cengage Learning. 2008, 147

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 147

¹¹⁶ See Hendriks, J. 2004. *Studying congregations in Africa*. Wellington: Lux Verbi. BM. 2004, 231

¹¹⁷ See Mouton, *How to succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies*. 2001, 196

¹¹⁸ See Bailey, C. 1996. *A Guide to Field Research*. California: Pine Forge Press. 1996, 65-71

is not just a process of watching but a process in which all senses should be used. Observation of people as well as physical surroundings took place.

It is also important to take a close look at the *physical surroundings* during field work, since these can tell their own story about the people in that space. The following could be given attention to during the process of observation: lighting, colour, smell, sounds and objects, to name but a few.

A great deal of time was spent *observing members* in specific congregations. The most obvious things might be gender and approximate age but the manner in which people sit in the church might also have a deeper meaning. The dress code also indicated whether it is a more conservative congregation or a more progressive one.

Nonverbal and *verbal behaviour* also play an important role when observing people. Body language, facial expressions as well as posture can give insight into understanding people better. In the same manner verbal behaviour can also provide information about a specific situation. It is however important to record clearly the verbal as well as the nonverbal reactions as each may tell a different story on their own.

1.6.3.2. Interviewing methodology

The initial design was to structure informal, unstructured and semi-structured interviews with members from the different congregations. In the case of the Xhosa-speaking members, the need for an interpreter was foreseen in order to give participants the option of communicating in their mother tongue. Hendriks is of the opinion that senior leaders in a congregation should not be part of the interviewing process as this might inhibit the participants.¹¹⁹ However, after the challenges experienced during the initial planning phase of the research (see 1.6.1), it was evident that another method would need to be established in order to get input from potential participants.

¹¹⁹ See Hendriks, *Studying congregations in Africa*. 2004, 232

Interviewing can be understood as “a basic mode of inquiry”¹²⁰ and also “a directed conversation”.¹²¹ Throughout the ages, human beings have tried to make sense of their experiences by the narratives that they share. Suffice to say that interviewing takes time. During this time a specific topic is explored and the participants get a chance to share their personal experiences.

The aim of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how the ministers experienced lament in the liturgy, if at all. The interview was kept informal and conversational. The questions served as a guide that could be used in a flexible and contextually appropriate manner. The interview guide would allow the researcher to concentrate on what the participants are saying and not to get distracted by what the following question should be.¹²²

After deliberations with my supervisor and the ministers, it was decided to structure the interview part differently. Only the ministers would be interviewed in an informal manner (see Addendum H). The rest of the participants completed a questionnaire after a Sunday morning sermon that focused particularly on lament.

1.6.3.3. Thick Descriptions

Thick descriptions are the result of field observations and it provides much detail of what was experienced in the field. Given the fact that each account in the field is described in detail, many pages of information describing the event would be generated. Making sense of the mass of data collected can sometimes be a daunting task.¹²³ For Carol Bailey, what is learnt from the research in the field is based on the “*subjective understanding and interpretation of the researcher*”.¹²⁴ The history and personality of the researcher will inevitably form part of the interpretive process.

¹²⁰ See Seidman, I. 2006. Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in Education and Social Sciences. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. 2006, 8

¹²¹ See Charmaz, K. 2006. Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. London: SAGE Publications. 2006, 25

¹²² Ibid., 25-28

¹²³ Bailey, C.A. 1996. *A Guide to Field Research*. California: Pine Forge Press. 1996, 4

¹²⁴ Ibid., 4

For the purpose of this research, “the field” would constitute the different participating congregations. Scheduled contact sessions were organised and the researcher was able to observe congregations while they were worshipping. A detailed account of the different services were recorded. This provided valuable information regarding the presence of lament in the liturgy.

1.6.4. Data analysis

During this phase the results of the data were interpreted. This interpretation was done in dialogue with the research question. The conclusions are drawn and the researcher can then see whether the hypothesis is true or false.¹²⁵ The careful analysis of data is very important as this has a direct effect on the success of a research project. For Gibson and Brown the process of data analysis is “being able to *say something* through engagement with the data and using it to reflect not just on the particular setting being explored, but ideally, to create some generalizable or at least ‘generally interesting’ finding or idea that can be taken forward in other contexts”.¹²⁶ The engagement of the data is an ongoing process that takes place throughout the research project. The data was analysed using the computer program Statistica Version 11 of 2013.¹²⁷

Statistica is described on its website¹²⁸ as a statistics and analytical software package that “provides the most comprehensive array of data analysis, data management, data visualization, and data mining solutions. Techniques include the widest selection of predictive modelling, clustering, classification, and exploratory procedures in one software platform”. During the analysis phase, a table of data will be loaded onto the program and statistical functions will be applied as per request from the operator.

¹²⁵ See Hendriks, *Studying congregations in Africa*. 2004, 229-230

¹²⁶ See Gibson, J & Brown, A. 2009. *Working with Qualitative Data*. Los Angeles: SAGE. 2009, 1

¹²⁷ The Centre for Statistical Consultation provided the expertise for this analysis.

¹²⁸ See <http://www.statsoft.com/> (Accessed 02 February 2015)

The first step in the analysis was to categorise the participating congregations. This would provide the different frequency distributions, i.e. counting the number of respondents, who answered each question in each of the possible ways. Each question on the questionnaire was also labelled appropriately. The information on the questionnaires was captured on Excel after which it was imported into Statistica. Different frequency tables were generated accordingly. The Statistica outputs covers the detailed information that was used during the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of these outputs (see 2.6 and 2.7).

1.7. Aims and objectives

I am hoping that this research would:

- Encourage people to dialogue about the issue of lament and liturgy in our church;
- Encourage church leaders to be open to including a process of lament in the liturgy;
- Encourage congregations to be part of this process;
- Encourage congregations to work on concrete symbolism that could be used in their liturgy -- symbolism that would enable the congregation to lament, to experience healing and to be hopeful for our future;
- Give our congregations the opportunity to develop a language of lament -- a language that will enable us to voice our suffering, whether it is communal or individual;
- Encourage our congregations to dream big for their communities -- to see a better future for us and our children;
- Enable me to design workshops where congregations could be assisted in the process of lament;
- Publish articles.

Most of all, I hope that this research will allow us to look anew at the Bible in terms of the language of lament that is used in liturgy.

1.8. Preliminary chapter arrangement

The chapter arrangement was done according to Osmer's method as discussed in 1.6. Chapter 1 and chapter 2 focus on the descriptive-empirical task and continuously look at what is happening in the different congregations that participated in this study. In chapter 2 the results of the empirical study are discussed as a continuation of the questions asked in chapter 1.

In chapter 3 to chapter 5 the researcher explores the normative task, with particular attention to the context and character of lament, lament in the Old Testament and the New Testament as well as different theological constructions of lament.

Chapter 6 looks at the pragmatic task (*how should we respond*), specifically in the context of the Holy Communion.

Chapter 7 serves as a summary and conclusion to this research.

1.9. Scheduling of the research program

The intention was to complete the study within 3 years but due to unforeseen circumstances it took longer¹²⁹. During this study I was able to expose myself to different contexts in the URCSA to try to ascertain how the issue of lament in liturgy is being addressed. Besides the literature research in South Africa, the researcher was hoping to spend some time overseas to do literature research and interview appropriate scholars on the theme of the research. Unfortunately this did not materialise.

1.10. Possible Value of Research

I am hopeful that this research will provide a tool for all congregations in URCSA and the church at large, which might enable them to incorporate lament into liturgy in a practical manner. It should enable them to look with fresh eyes at their weekly liturgy and see where

¹²⁹ Refer to 2.3 for a detailed description of challenges experienced during the process.

they can make slight changes, to begin with. With time and experience, they should be empowered to address the issues confronting congregants in their various communities. By addressing these issues, through lament in their liturgies, it could serve as a catalyst for a community to stand up and stand together for what they believe in. It could assist people to get involved in each others lives in a practical fashion. Lament in liturgy could also serve as a vehicle to encourage people to open themselves for a journey of healing and reconciliation. It could be a safe space in which they can live their vulnerability before God and their faith community

What is important to remember though is that each congregation within the wider URCSA is unique, so the rituals of lament should not be understood in a general manner. What could work for one congregation would not necessarily work for another. Those involved in constructing the liturgy and creating new rituals need to take cognisance of the uniqueness of the congregation. They also need to be in tune with the community at large and what the people experience on a daily basis. This will allow them to create new, but also realistic rituals that address the issues that people are struggling with.

We need to realise that the inclusion of lament in our liturgies should not just be reserved for a Sunday morning. It might be even more useful in our smaller prayer meetings and cell groups where people are more at ease with each other and where a sense of closeness exists. This would be a good starting point and allow people to grow into the practise. I am therefore hopeful that lament in liturgy would be incorporated into the smaller gatherings of our church as well.

Hopefully this research will also teach us that we do not just have to pray for issues in our personal lives as well as in the life of the congregation. Yes, we do need to pray and ask guidance from the Holy Spirit. But as a faith community, we can also be actively involved in fostering the positive change in our communities.

1.11. Conclusion

Chapter 1 and chapter 2 forms part of the descriptive-empirical task. In chapter 1 the focus is on an introduction and background of the research, while chapter 2 further reflects on this task by way of an analysis of the data that was collected during direct observations, questionnaires as well as interviews. In other words, the first two phases of Osmer are integrated in these two chapters. This practical theological interpretation gives an opportunity to understand the statistical results of how lament is incorporated, if at all, in the existing liturgies of the participating congregations. Osmer understands it as an invitation from Practical theology to “*interpret the texts of contemporary lives and practices*”.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ See Osmer, *Practical Theology*. 2008, 32-33

Chapter 2

Results of the Empirical Study

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the data obtained in the different congregations while engaging the descriptive-empirical task and the interpretive task. The statistical information gives a good indication of how these congregations experience lament in their existing liturgies. The process of the ethical clearance is also discussed in detail.

In the first chapter, the research hypothesis was formulated as follows:

The appropriate role of lament in the liturgy of URCSA will make the church more relevant in the lives of her members and bring a message of hope and healing to the community.

The aim of this chapter therefore is to try to establish, with the help of the collected and analysed data; how lament is experienced in the participating congregations, if at all. Chapter 2 is consequently a further reflection on task one, namely “what is going on?” This chapter provides us with the necessary information to establish whether lament is present at all in the liturgies of the participating congregations and whether it needs to be *reclaimed* or *revisited*.

This chapter is based on five sections. Firstly, background is provided for the ethical clearance that was obtained during this study. Secondly, it gives a detailed account of challenges experienced during the research project. Thirdly, it provides information regarding the collection of the data. Fourthly, it provides concept clarifications and finally the researcher attempt analysis and discussion of the data.

2.2. Introduction: Ethical Clearance

In order to revisit and reclaim the process of lament, it was important to establish whether and to what extent lament was actually incorporated in worship services in URCSA. A literature study was not considered adequate for this particular research, so a complementary empirical component was figured in. In the chapter, *The Ethics and Politics of Social Research*, Babbie describes in detail what research entails in a social context.¹³¹ There are ethical and political considerations that need to be taken into account before the research starts. These considerations also do not stand in isolation from the scientific ones. Against this background, an application had to be made to the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) at the University of Stellenbosch before commencing with the empirical research.

In the application to the ethical committee, a prescribed application form had to be completed. Letters of permission from the church councils where the research would be done, had to state clearly that the researcher could do observations in the congregation. It also had to state clearly that the researcher would conduct a sermon, as part of the research process. Apart from thick description observations, the researcher designed a questionnaire¹³² that had to be completed by the participants. An English version of the questionnaire is attached as Addendum D, the Afrikaans version is Addendum E and the Xhosa version is Addendum F. The questionnaire was taken to the Centre for Statistical Consultation¹³³ at the University of Stellenbosch for review and fine-tuning.

The application to the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) consisted of the following documents:

1. Research proposal,
2. Ethics questionnaire,
3. Consent forms,

¹³¹ See Babbie, E. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*. Thomson: Wadsworth. 2004, 61-72

¹³² This questionnaire was translated into English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. This would allow the participants to complete the questionnaire in the language in which they are comfortable.

¹³³ Dr Justin Harvey provided valuable information and guidance during these sessions.

4. Participant questionnaire
5. Letters of permission from the church councils as well as the
6. Application form.

The research committee reviewed the procedures, as explained by the researcher, and made sure that the processes complied with all the regulations, provisions and stipulations. The committee also provided a list of investigator responsibilities that had to be followed carefully. Any changes in the procedures had to be cleared by the committee first.

2.3. Challenges experienced

Obtaining permission from the different church councils turned out to be quite a lengthy process. The church council meets only once a quarter and it therefore took about 5 months, from the time of request, until receiving the formal letters of permission. The protocol approved period was from 27 October 2011 until 26 October 2012. It also took some time for some of the congregations to submit their church calendars which were needed to synchronise observation visits with the congregations. Initially the intention was to do research in six congregations, all within 50km from Stellenbosch, which would facilitate visits for the researcher¹³⁴ in terms of time spent at each congregation as well as expenses.

However, due to the fact that the administration for permission took so long and only three¹³⁵ congregations could be visited per month for their Sunday services, the researcher and promoter agreed to reduce the number of congregations. This would provide the researcher with adequate time in each congregation and the observations could be done within the

¹³⁴ Another challenge that was experienced was the fact that this was the first time that the researcher did empirical research. Observing the congregation and taking notes as well at times became quite challenging. However, as time passed it became easier. It also helped to write up the observations immediately after a session, while the memory was still fresh. Yet another challenge was that the researcher fell pregnant during the protocol approved period and had to reschedule sessions on occasion. Fortunately the ministers were sympathetic in this regard and in most instances the approved schedule could be followed. During the early stages of the literature studies, on 01st January 2010, the researcher's father passed away after a short illness. It was a difficult time for the family and the researcher was unable to do research for approximately 6 months.

¹³⁵ The researcher had to be present in her own congregation at least once a month.

specified time frame. In selecting the congregations, we made sure that the issues of cultural groups and socio-economic circumstances were taken into consideration.

The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Cape Synod consists of 319 congregations and 29 presbyteries.¹³⁶ The researcher is therefore not suggesting that the conclusions drawn from this research is indicative of the whole of the Cape Synod, but rather that it gives an indication of these three specific congregations and what happens in their liturgies regarding the inclusion of lament. Congregations have different worshipping styles and a research study that takes different congregations in different synods into consideration might obtain different conclusion. However, for this study, we will concentrate on the three specific congregations. One of the congregations is situated in the Northern suburbs, a second one is east from Stellenbosch and the third one lies in a South-Westerly direction.

2.4. Data Collection

Data was collected by means of thick observations, informal interviews and questionnaires. During the observation sessions attention was given to the physical surroundings of the churches as well as the observation of the congregants. Refer to 1.6.3 in chapter 1 for more information on the data collection techniques.

It is important to note that the presence of a researcher might have a potential advantage as well as some drawbacks. During the observations the participants can be studied first-hand but the presence of the researcher could be a stumbling block. During interviews and questionnaires the information is actually presented second-hand. In these instances there is the possibility of participants misleading the researcher. A drawback is that the presence of the researcher, who is most probably a stranger, may influence the behaviour of the subjects and a false picture could be painted.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Information obtained from the Administration desk of the URCSA Head Office in Belhar on 18 October 2013.

¹³⁷ See Huysamen, G.K. 1994. *Methodology for the social and behavioural sciences*. International Thomson Publishing (South Africa): Goodwood. 1994, 139-142

The observation of the participants required that the researcher takes part (and reports) on their devotion experiences. For Huysamen the researcher actually becomes “*a member of the inner circle of the group or event that is being studied*”.¹³⁸ Observations were done during the Sunday morning services in each of the congregations. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to experience first-hand if lament was a spontaneous part of the liturgy or whether it was composed to allow members to deal with challenging issues. See Appendices – “Thick Descriptions” for a recording of these services. A variety of services were attended, including Holy Communion, Baptism as well as services dedicated specifically to the youth and the children. Initially the idea was to attend Sunday services as well as Wednesday evening services, but the Wednesday services do not take place in all the congregations, and where it did happen, the structure was very informal. The researcher and promoter thus decided to limit the investigation to the Sunday morning services in which the majority of congregants participated.

Unstructured, informal interviews were held with the ministers of the congregations. One interview was held at the office of the researcher¹³⁹, one interview at the rectory and another interview was held at the home¹⁴⁰ of the minister. An informal conversation about the research topic took place. The presence and/or absence of lament in the liturgy of their respective congregations were also discussed. A verbatim of the interviews is available in the following sections: 8.4.1.8, 8.4.2.8 and 8.4.3.7. See Appendix H for a sample of the guiding questions in this regard. Also keep in mind the thoughts discussed in 1.6.2.2 regarding the interviewing methodology.

Initially, before acquiring permission from the ethics committee, a first round of an informal discussion took place at the congregations. Permission was obtained from the church council to introduce the research to members of the congregations. People were invited to contact the researcher if they would be willing to participate in the research. Although during these

¹³⁸ Ibid., 169

¹³⁹ This venue was more convenient for the minister since he had to collect his children from school after the interview.

¹⁴⁰ The minister requested this venue since he also invited the researcher and the assistant researcher for Sunday lunch.

sessions some people had been quite excited about the topic and at least 100 people were present, not one single person contacted the researcher to show their interest of being part of the research. These informal sessions were held to give an initial explanation of what people could expect during the research. The aim of this approach was to initiate the pilot study in order to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed project. See 1.6.2 for a detailed discussion on this issue.

Initial discussions with the ministers indicated that people usually do not like to stay at church after the sermon, and for this reason, the questionnaire was kept very short. All the questions fitted onto an A4 sheet and people were asked to select the most appropriate answer. However, they were given the opportunity to comment on particular questions. Structuring the questionnaire in this manner would prevent people from getting frustrated with a long and drawn-out questionnaire. The researcher was not part of this process to avoid influencing people in their responses. The researcher enlisted the assistance of a doctoral student to help with this process. Doing the questionnaire session in this manner made it unnecessary for the researcher to have to reassemble the respondents again at a later stage. People were invited to the process and it all happened in a voluntary manner.

The procedure was explained in a language that the people could understand. It was stressed that participation in the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point. The necessary consent forms were explained and once signed by the participants these were returned to the research assistant. The questionnaire forms were then explained and people were provided with pens to complete these forms.

2.5. Concept clarification

2.5.1. Key concepts with regards to the observation

A few key concepts, with regards to the terminology being used, will now be explained. An overlap in descriptions might occur but it will nonetheless be made.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ See Bailey, C.A. 1996. *A guide to Field Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press. 1996, 2-6

2.5.1.1. Fieldwork

Fieldwork¹⁴² will take place over a period of time and it involves the interaction and observation of everyday life, in a specific context. The objective of the fieldwork is to try and understand how the group and/or people being studied experience their daily lives from within their own context. The collection of data can take months, even years, and it is normally obtained in the field or setting which is of interest. Data is obtained through a number of avenues, i.e. conversations, structured/unstructured interviews as well as observation through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell¹⁴³ – to name but a few. This data then needs to be analyzed and interpreted. Through the process of fieldwork, the participants are able to be part of the process and can also provide input throughout. This will obviously have an impact on the type and interpretation of data that the researcher will obtain. Even though Nancy Ammerman¹⁴⁴ also describes the method of field research, the term used is “direct observation”.

2.5.1.2. Ethnography

Ethnography is described by Janice Morse and Lyn Richards as a “*means for exploring cultural groups*”. They do however make it clear that “*culture is an abstract concept used to account for the beliefs, values, and behaviors of cohesive groups of people*”.¹⁴⁵ Morse and Richards also alluded to the fact that the data in ethnography could be of multiple types. It could consist of observational data, field notes, interviews as well as the researcher’s notes. Also, the data could have various formats, ranging from interviews, questionnaires or surveys.¹⁴⁶ The term ethnography and field work are often used interchangeable with field research.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴²Ibid., 9. Fieldwork is often referred to as field study as well.

¹⁴³Ibid., 9. Observation, which is obtained through observing non-verbal behaviour, is referred to as “observational studies”. Through this method the researcher observes behaviour rather than questioning participants about their behaviour.

¹⁴⁴ See Ammerman, N.T. *et al.* (eds.) 1998. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1998, 199.

¹⁴⁵ See Morse, J.M. and Richards, L. 2002. *Readme First for a user’s guide to Qualitative Methods*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California. 2002, 48

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 50-51

¹⁴⁷ See Bailey, *A guide to Field Research*. 1996, 9

2.5.1.3. Direct observation

Direct observation is explained in section 1.6.2.1.

2.5.1.4. Thick descriptions

Thick descriptions are explained in 1.6.2.3.

2.5.1.5. Overt and covert investigations

During overt investigations the group or individuals being observed are aware of the dual role of the researcher, namely as participant and researcher. Covert investigations, on the other hand, are those in which people are not aware of the dual role of the researcher. This could obviously have ethical implications.

2.5.1.6. Ethical Considerations

The present research allowed the researcher to be part of congregations and experience private facets of people's lives. It was therefore necessary to be aware of the ethical considerations that might be relevant during the field research. Ethical considerations vary from one research project to the next. Huysamen gives the following examples:

no ethical objection could be levelled convincingly against the measurements of the finger dexterity of a group of male and a group of female volunteers to investigate possible differences in finger dexterity between the two sex groups. On the other hand, no researcher would consider assigning a group of parents randomly to two groups and compel one group to regularly molest their children to investigate the effect of such molesting on the emotional development of children.¹⁴⁸

He also makes it clear that research procedures that could cause harm to participants should not be performed in any event.

¹⁴⁸ See Huysamen, *Methodology for the social and behavioural sciences*. 1994, 178

2.5.1.7. Deception

Deceiving people to get them to participate in a research project is unethical. The researcher must make sure that prospective subjects are sure about what the research entails. In cases where deception is necessary for the experiment to work, the participants must be debriefed after the experiment has been done. However, Babbie stresses that telling the truth to people after an experiment should be dealt with in a sensitive manner. The researcher must make sure that the “*subjects aren’t left with bad feelings or doubts about themselves based on their performance in the experiment*”.¹⁴⁹

Various voices are heard regarding the requirement of informed consent. Some argue that deception in the field is acceptable and that informed consent is not strictly necessary. The reason for this is the fact that the research “*takes place in a natural setting, with little manipulation and control over those being studied*” so there is in fact very little potential in harming the subjects.¹⁵⁰ Some also argue that without deception it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to conduct research in certain instances.

2.5.1.8. Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are often confused. A research project should state clearly whether it is confidential or anonymous. In the case of *confidentiality* the researcher would be in a position to identify the responses as well as the identification of a subject, but not do so publicly, whereas *anonymity* would indicate that the information is secret, unidentifiable or unknown. The researcher would thus not be able to identify the participants. An example would be a “*mail survey in which no identification numbers are put on the questionnaires before their return to the research office*”.¹⁵¹ Babbie also warns that “researchers should never use the term *anonymous* to mean *confidential*”.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ See Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 2004, 68

¹⁵⁰ See Bailey, *A guide to Field Research*. 1996, 11-12

¹⁵¹ See Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 2004, 65

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 66

2.5.1.9. Informed consent

Participants in a research project have the right to know what they are letting themselves in for and their informed consent implies voluntary participation. The researcher must be sensitive to instances where subjects still fear victimization for non-participation and provide alternatives. In the case where questionnaires are to be completed, the researcher could refrain from being part of the process to allow people to feel free when completing the questionnaire.

For Bailey, the researcher must make sure that the participants understand

that they are participating in research, the purpose of the research, the procedure of the research, the risks and benefits of the research, the voluntary nature of research participation, the participant's right to stop the research at any time and the procedure used to protect confidentiality.¹⁵³

Subjects must sign the consent form indicating that they are aware of the risks involved.

2.5.1.10. No Harm

For Babbie, *“social research should never injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study”*.¹⁵⁴ This harm includes more than just physical injury. Participants can also be harmed emotionally and psychologically if information is revealed about their personal lives or preferences.

Babbie also deals with the potential harm resulting from the analysis and reporting of data. The example given is of a questionnaire that was distributed in some churches. The ministers were asked to distribute the questionnaires to a specified group of congregants, collect them and return them to the researcher. However, one of the ministers read through the completed

¹⁵³ See Bailey, *A guide to Field Research*. 1996, 11

¹⁵⁴ See Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 2004, 64

questionnaires, before returning them. The next Sunday, in his sermon, he attacked the participants even though he could not identify the subjects.¹⁵⁵

The researcher must not harm himself or herself nor the profession that they represent.¹⁵⁶ At the University of Stellenbosch, an ethical committee evaluates the research process to make sure that no harm will come to the participants or the researcher.

2.5.1.11. Safety

The safety of participants should be taken into consideration. It is however also important that researchers considers their own personal safety. These issues should be considered before fieldwork commences.

2.6. Statistical Processing and Data Analysis

Formal interaction with the congregations happened by way of a questionnaire on the day that the researcher preached a sermon, with the focus on lament in liturgy and how it could be incorporated into our Holy Communion celebrations. At the start of the research, when the researcher was introduced to the congregants, the congregants were informed that the research process would culminate in a sermon conducted by the researcher. The congregation was reminded the Sunday before the sermon took place and they were invited to be part of the process. However, it was stressed that participation in the process was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. The congregation was reminded that a questionnaire would be available after the service and that they were welcome to complete it in order to share their thoughts on lament. The researcher was not part of the questionnaire process. These questionnaires were available in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of demographical information, which would be used to extract information for specific sections of the congregations. The second half of the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 64-65

¹⁵⁶ See Bailey, *A guide to Field Research*. 1996, 11

questionnaire consisted of eight questions related to the theme of lament in liturgy. The questionnaire was only one page long and participants had to select the most appropriate answer. The questions ranged from their personal understanding of lament to whether the sermon was helpful in explaining the concept of lament. Participants were also asked whether they would find the inclusion of lament in the liturgy helpful and whether they believed it could have a positive effect on the congregation. In cases where the answer was “NO”, space was provided for a brief explanation.

The information was analysed and the following themes were drawn from the data:

- i) Church participation;
- ii) Age group participation;
- iii) Gender participation;
- iv) Understanding the concept of lament;
- v) Learning about lament;
- vi) Sunday service attendance per church
- vii) Understanding the concept of lament per church;
- viii) Learning about lament per church.

The number of people in attendance on the Sunday when the questionnaires were completed were as follows:

URCSA-X consisted of 40 adults, 40-50 children and 25-30 young people.

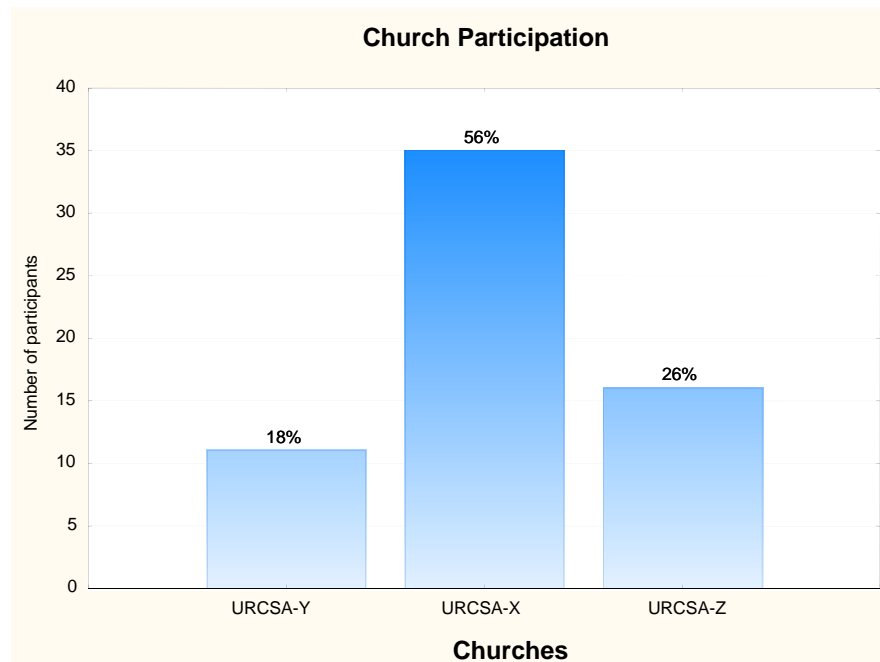
URCSA-Y consisted of 200 people.

URCSA-Z consisted of 15 men, 40 women, 30 children and 20 young people.

The number of people for URCSA-X and URCSA-Y were counted by the research assistant.

The number of URCSA-Y was provided by the church council and unfortunately a breakdown was not done. The number of adults for URCSA-X was also not broken down in terms of male and female.

2.6.1. Church Participation

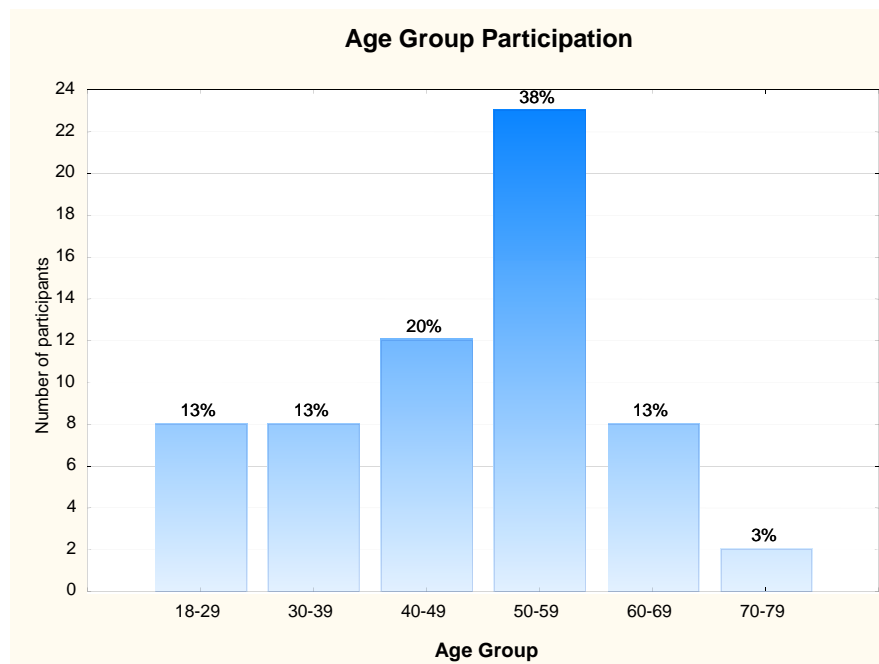


As indicated on the histogram, URCSA-X had 56% participation, URCSA-Y had 18% participation while URCSA-Z recorded a 26% participation. A positive and energetic atmosphere existed when URCSA-X and URCSA-Z completed the questionnaires. URCSA-Y was a bit hesitant to be part of the process. The researcher went to the vestry when the questionnaire process begun. The research assistant was briefed fully and she handled the whole process. In most cases, when the researcher went to the vestry she was alone because most of the church council members also wanted to complete the questionnaire. The number of questionnaires completed was as follow:

- i) URCSA-X completed 35 forms;
- ii) URCSA-Y completed 12 forms but one form had to be disqualified because the person was not a member of URCSA
- iii) URCSA-Z completed 16 forms.

These numbers include males and females as well as all age groups as stipulated on the questionnaire. As mentioned before, this process was completely voluntary and even though many more people were in attendance on the specific day, only these few decided to be part of the research.

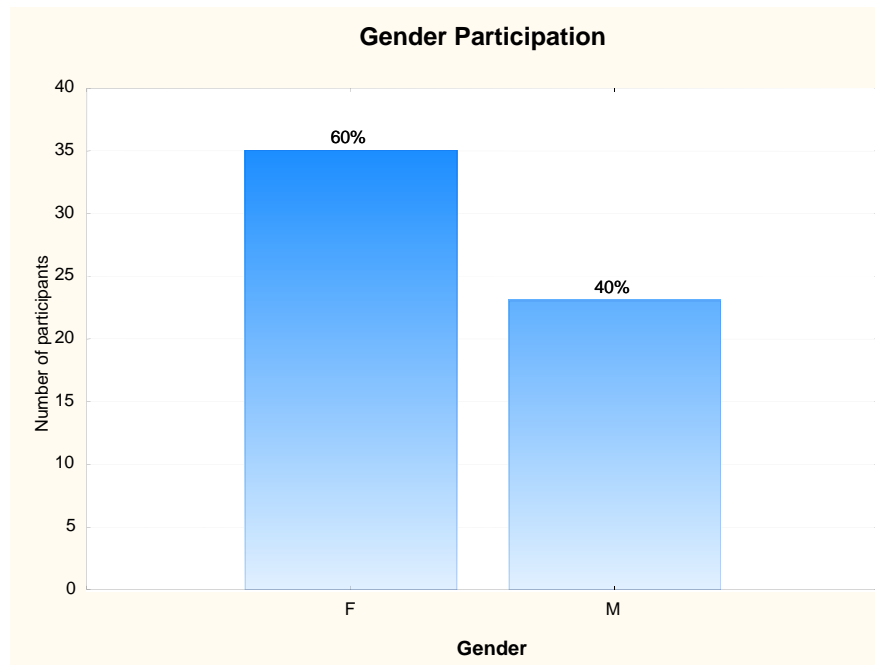
2.6.2. Age Group Participation



The histogram depicts the age group participation of all three churches. As indicated, the highest rate of participation is registered for the age group 50-59 years, while the lowest participation was registered in the age group 70-79 years. The age groups 18-29 years, 30-39 years and 60-69 years each registered 13% participation.

People younger than 18 years were not part of the research since they would have needed special permission from their parents or guardians. The parents and/or guardians might not have been present in church during the questionnaire session and this would have posed a problem in terms of obtaining the necessary consent. For this reason, it was decided to exclude them from the research.

2.6.3. Gender Participation

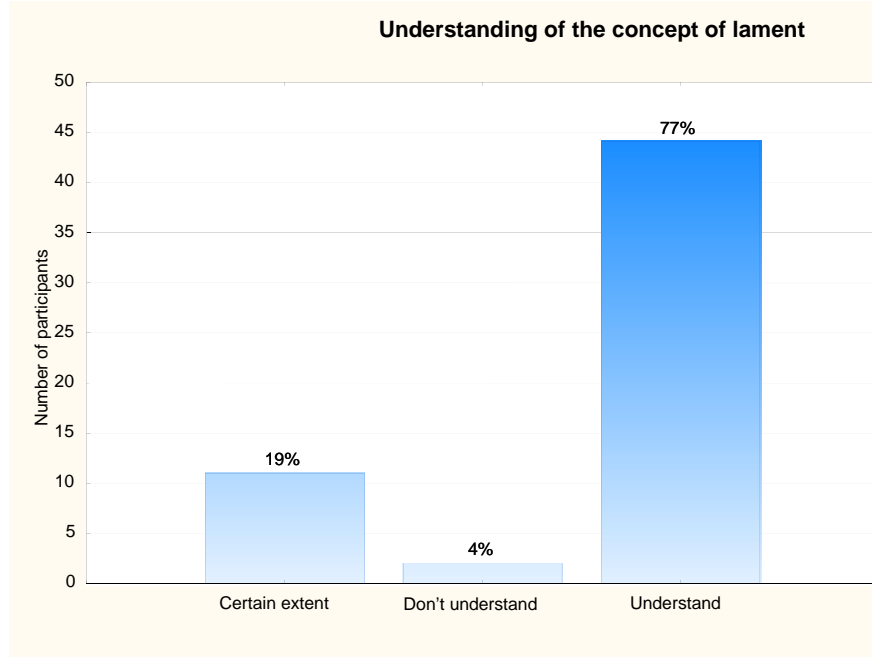


This histogram depicts a participation of 60% for females and 40% for males for all the churches. In general, during the thick description observation sessions, the number of female congregants outweighed the number of men in attendance. The same was true for the specific day when questionnaires were completed.

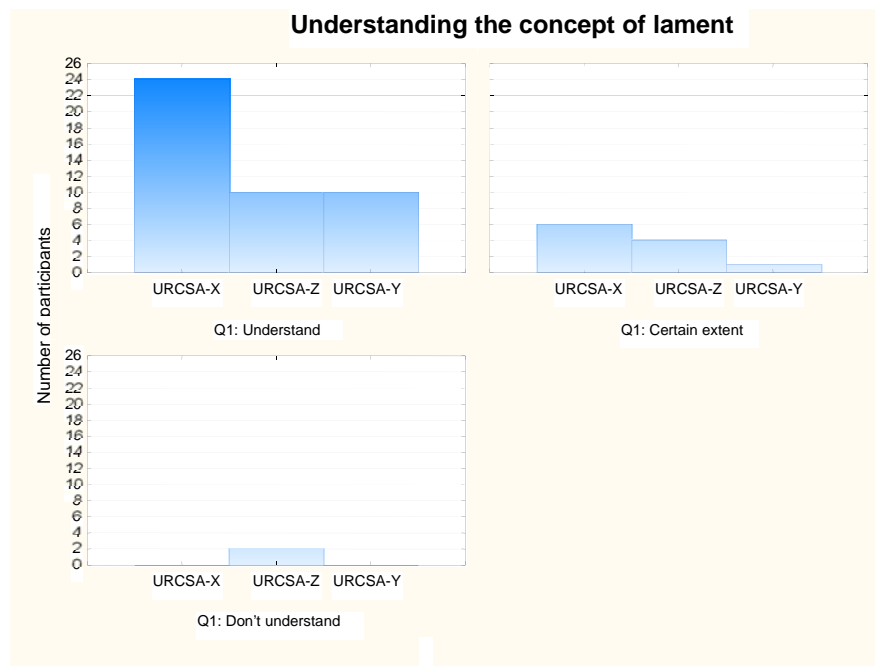
This depiction simply indicates that more women were willing to be part of the research process on that particular Sunday.

2.6.4. Understanding the concept of lament

2.6.4.1. Understanding the concept of lament for participating churches



2.6.4.2. Understanding the concept of lament for individual churches



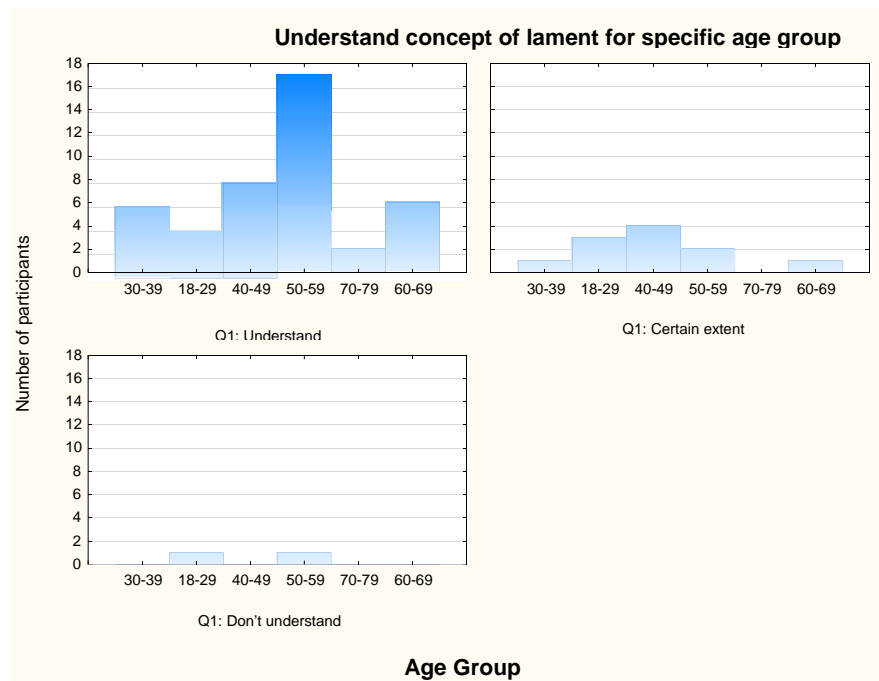
Question 1 reads as follows:

1. Which ONE is most appropriate?

- ☐ I understand the concept of lament
- ☐ I have **some** understanding of the concept of lament
- ☐ I do not understand the concept of lament

The two histograms depict the understanding of the concept of lament in all three churches as well as for each church respectively. The results show that 77% of the participants indicated that they do understand lament. While 4% indicated that they are not familiar with the concept at all. 19% indicated that they understand the concept of lament but only to a certain extent.

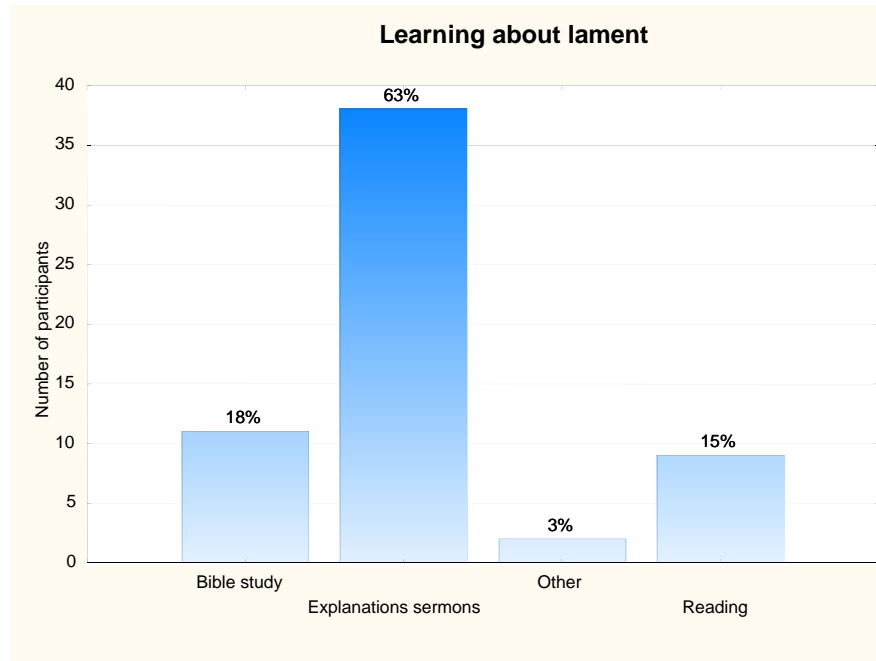
2.6.4.3. Understanding the concept of lament for different age groups



The histogram above depicts the 50-59 year age group as having the better understanding of lament. A small number of participants indicated that they do not understand the concept of lament at all.

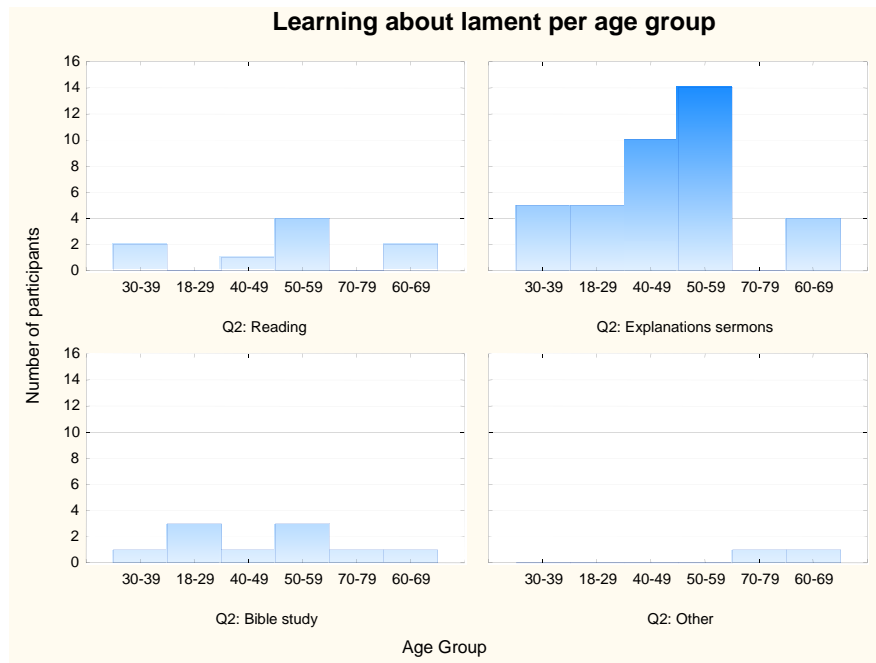
2.6.5. Learning about lament

2.6.5.1. Learning about lament for participating churches



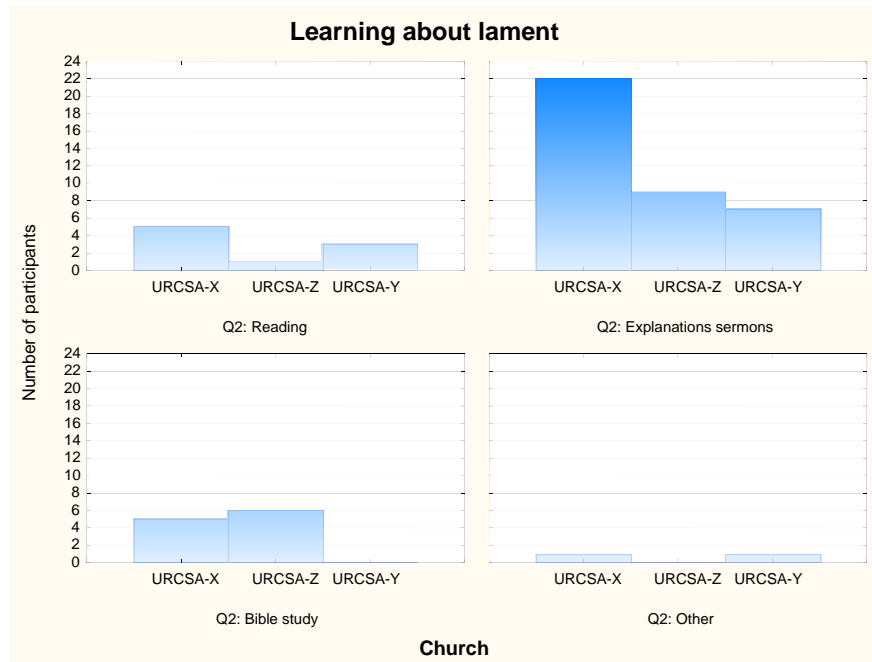
The histogram indicates that 63% participants learnt about lament through the explanations observed in sermons, 18% through Bible study, and 15% through reading while 3% obtained the information via other means.

2.6.5.2. Learning about lament for participating churches by age group



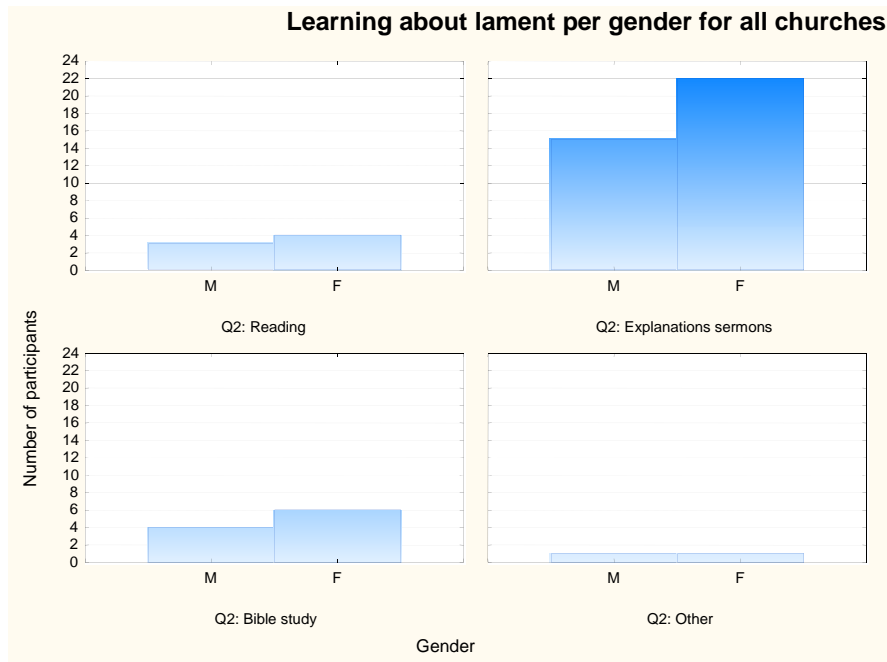
This histogram shows all the age groups that participated in the questionnaire. It is clear that the participants learnt about lament mostly through explanations in sermons. The highest scorers were the age groups 50-59 years and 40-49 years. A few participants indicated that they learnt about lament through Bible studies and reading. A couple of participants in the age groups 60-69 years and 70-79 years also indicated that they got to know about lament through other means.

2.6.5.3. Learning about lament for individual churches



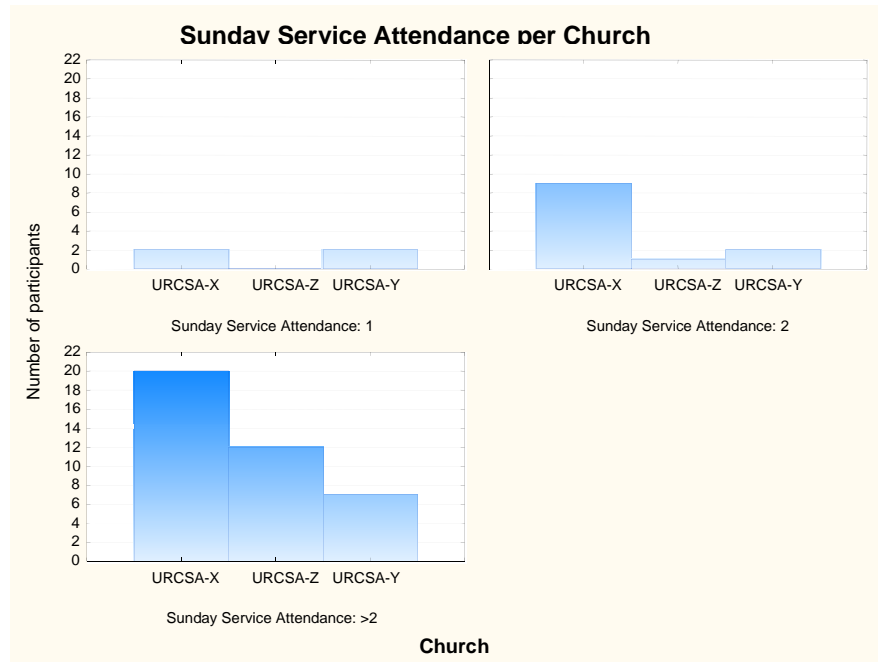
The histogram gives us an indication of the numbers per church. It clearly confirms that participants learnt about lament mostly through the explanations in sermons. A few participants indicated that they have learnt about lament through Bible studies and reading as well.

2.6.5.4. Learning about lament per gender



The explanations via sermons were once again the option that was chosen the most. 22 female participants indicated that this is how they learnt about lament, in comparison with the 15 male participants. Four female and three male participants learnt about lament through reading, while 4 male and 6 female participants chose the Bible study option.

2.6.6. Sunday service attendance per church



The histogram indicates that people mostly attend more than two Sunday services per month.

2.7. Discussion of analysed data

The direct observation took place from 27 October 2011 to 26 October 2012. During this time scheduled visits were done in all the participating congregations, the sermon with a focus on lament was preached in all the participating congregations and the interviews with the ministers also took place.

In URCSA-X the sermon took place on the 22nd July 2012, in URCSA-Y on the 12th August 2012 and in URCSA-Z on the 22nd October 2012. The service had to take place when a Holy Communion service was scheduled on the yearly calendar of these congregations. Holy Communion is served at least once a quarter in URCSA and these were the available dates for the respective congregations.

Two of the services took place during winter when presumably the cold weather might have deterred people from attending church, hence having a negative impact on the number of participants. However, having more people attending church does not imply that more people would have participated in the research project. Since participation was voluntary the outcome does not depend on the number of people in church on that specific day. On the Sunday in question, URCSA-X had between 105 and 120 people in attendance, URCSA-Y had 200 people and URCSA-Z had 105 people. Of these only 56% from URCSA-X participated in the questionnaire, i.e. 35 participants. URCSA-Y had 18% participation and this amounts to eleven forms being completed. URCSA-Z had 26% participation which translates to 16 completed questionnaires. This still leaves a high number of non-participants.

As mentioned earlier, only three congregations, admittedly a small percentage of the URCSA churches in the Western Cape were observed. It is important to note that the different congregations in URCSA do not all have the same style of worship but follows its own identity and style of worship. Therefore the same research project conducted in another province, or just another area of the Western Cape, might deliver different results. With this particular project the intention of the researcher was to observe the trends concerning lament in liturgy in the specified URCSA congregations (rather than in the whole of the URCSA).

Since the researcher is a minister in URCSA special precautions were taken to avoid influencing the results by people feeling compelled to respond in a certain way. The Ethics Committee also wanted to know whether the participants were subordinate to the person doing the recruiting – in which case, the selection of subordinates needed to be justified. The researcher indicated that she would not be part of the questionnaire process and that it would include an explanation of the research and what was expected of participants. A consent form would also be explained and should be signed upon agreement to participate. The assumption was that the researcher's absence would put participants at ease to provide their feedback on the sermon as well as their general understanding of lament in liturgy. The Ethical Committee was satisfied with this process and granted permission.

As explained in 2.4, it was important to keep the questionnaire short and to the point so that participants would not become frustrated and leave half-way through the process. The questionnaire was evaluated by the Centre for Statistical Consultation at the University of Stellenbosch. Even though the questionnaire was short, participants still had the opportunity to clarify their answers.

Age group participation:

Most of the participants were 40-49 years and 50-59 years old. This was expected by the researcher because these are mature people with a lot of life experience, who are also the active ones in the church organisations, like the church choir and the Christian Woman's Movement. While one does not disregard the understanding of lament amongst our younger people, only 13% participated in the age groups of 18-29 years and 30-39 years.

The low participation percentage for the age group 70-79 years was also expected. In most cases the attendance of our senior citizens is declining due to health reasons, and the decline in numbers could also be attributed to the cold weather that we were experiencing.

Gender participation

During informal discussions at the churches, it was mostly the women who approached the researcher and shared thoughts on the research topic. Therefore, the 60% participation of women in the questionnaire came as no surprise. However, it must be reiterated that participation in this research process was voluntary.

Participation of congregants

During the Sunday morning service, congregants were invited to be part of the research. The following people were invited to come to the front and experience the different elements¹⁵⁷ that was on the table:

- a young person to represent the children,

¹⁵⁷ Refer to Addendum B for the various elements that were used.

- a second young person to represent the youth,
- a female to represent the woman in the congregation,
- a male to represent the men in the congregation and
- an elderly person to represent the senior citizens.

At two of the churches people were enthusiastic and responded to the invitation readily. However, in the third church people were reluctant and had to be invited three times. They came to the front only after the researcher promised them that nothing untoward would happen and that the church council had given their blessing for the proceedings. The researcher explained to the volunteers what would happen and that they were welcome to withdraw at any point, which allowed people to be more relaxed and apparently they enjoyed the experience.

The same sermon was preached in all three congregations. In URCSA-Z, the sermon was translated from Afrikaans to Xhosa. At the request of the minister in URCSA-X, the sermon was done in English, to show hospitality to overseas visitors that were present that morning.

Understanding of concept of lament

The histograms indicated that 77% of all participants recorded that they understood the concept of lament, while 19% understood it to some degree. Only 4% said that they did not understand it. Furthermore, question 7 in the questionnaire asked participants whether they thought that the inclusion of practical elements of lament in the liturgy could have a positive influence in their congregation. 97% agreed with this statement and 3% did not answer the question. 92% were of the opinion that it could be helpful to people if lament was included sometimes in the liturgy, whether in the form of sermons, prayer meetings or even songs. 8% did not answer the question.

Sermons

The researcher visited a number of congregations in order to do direct observations regarding their liturgy. This would give a picture of how lament is normally incorporated into the liturgy. The following table shows the selection of biblical texts used by the various ministers in the different congregations.¹⁵⁸

Date	Scripture Reading	Revised Common Lectionary Texts
URCSA-X		
05 February 2012 (5 th Sunday after Epiphany)	Judges 5:1-5, 15-16	1 Corinthians 9: 16-23
18 March 2012 (4 th Sunday in Lent)	Psalms 8:1-10 An extra reading is done from Psalms 51	Ephesians 2:1-10
27 May 2012 (Pentecost)	2 Timothy 2:1-23	Romans 8:22-27
17 June 2012 (3 rd Sunday after Pentecost)	Genesis 12:1-7	2Corinthians 5:6-10 (11-13), 14-17
22 July 2012 (8 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Psalms 13	Ephesians 2:11-22
16 September 2012 (16 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Isaiah 43:1	Mark 8:27-38
07 October 2012 (19 th Sunday after Pentecost)	1Thessalonians 1:1-10	Genesis 2:18-24
URCSA-Y		
26 February 2012 (1 st Sunday in Lent)	John 15:1-8	Genesis 9:8-17
01 April 2012 (6 th Sunday in Lent – Palm Sunday)	John 12: 12-16	John 12:12-16
10 June 2012 (2 nd Sunday after Pentecost)	2 Corinthians 4: 1-15	2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
01 July 2012 (5 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Psalms 119: 49-56	Mark 5:21-43
12 August 2012 (11 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Psalms 13	1 Kings 19:4-8
23 September 2012 (17 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Numbers 11	Mark 9:30-37
URCSA-Y		
04 March 2012 (2 nd Sunday in Lent)	Mark 8: 27-38	Genesis 17-7, 15-16
05 April 2012	John 19: 1-8, Corinthians 5: 7-8	Isaiah 52:13-53:12
26 August 2012 (13 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Acts 10: 34-43	Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

¹⁵⁸ The information for the revised common lectionary texts was obtained from Orsmond, E. en Botha, J. (eds.), 2011. Preekstudies en Liturgiese Voorstelle gebaseer op die kerkjaar. Revised Common Lectionary: Jaar B Advent 2011 tot Koninkrykstyding 2012. Stellenbosch: Communitas, Universiteit Stellenbosch.

30 September 2012 (18 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Haggai 2: 1-9	Mark 9:38-50
14 October 2012 (20 th Sunday after Pentecost)	Luke 1: 39-45	Amos 5:6-7, 10-15
21 October 2012 (21 st Sunday after Pentecost)	Psalms 13	Isaiah 53:4-12

The table clearly indicates that ministers do not necessarily follow the sermon guide with suggestions for the liturgy. Elements of lament, in most cases, were only detected during prayer. This in itself is not a problem. Jaco Hamman, Associate Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture at Vanderbilt Divinity School, is of the opinion that prayer “*functions as a transitional experience. It bridges our reality with the reality that God is preparing with and for us. A prayer of lament can span the chasm between a Gospel community’s uncertainty and hostility on the one hand, and hope and faith on the other. In addition, prayer of lament promotes solidarity with those who suffer...*”¹⁵⁹

The only time that a minister clearly explained lament throughout the sermon was during the Sunday morning service of URCSA-Y on 01st July 2012. The focus text for that morning was Psalms 119: 49-56. Throughout the sermon clear lines were drawn with regards to lament in our everyday lives. Reference was also made to the fact that our lives consists of lament and praise.

The researcher had the opportunity to preach on the issue of lament during a Holy Communion service in the participating congregations. The congregations were introduced to elements of lament and how we could incorporate it into our existing liturgy. In URCSA-X, congregants were very reluctant to participate in the demonstration of the elements to the rest of the congregation. They only came forward after the third invitation. The volunteers were asked to taste a salty liquid. This is indicative of the hardships that we encounter during our lives. After tasting the salty liquid a prayer of lament is done. After this initial introduction, the participants seemed to be more at ease.

¹⁵⁹ See Hamman, J. 2005. *When Steeples Cry: Leading congregations through loss and change*. The Pilgrim Press: Cleveland. 2005, 139

Secondly, the participants who represent the different age groups in the church are given an opportunity to each light a candle. This is to show that despite darkness that we may experience in our lives, God is our hope and comfort. Next the participants each get the opportunity to taste honey. This symbolizes the sweet experiences that we do have in our lives, despite the heartaches that we might experience from time to time.

Finally, the researcher consecrates olive oil and anoints all the participants, with the help of the presiding minister. At this point some people in the pews are protesting and seem to be sceptical about this act. Two participants break down in tears during this session and the researcher allows time for them to recover emotionally. One of these participants has recently lost his wife and is still coming to terms with her death.

These elements were also introduced in the other participating congregations. In URCSA-Y the atmosphere was quite tense throughout the whole process. Initially there was almost no reaction but this changed gradually as the researcher explained what it means to lament. Softer facial expressions seem to appear after Psalm 13 is explained in context. Although people seemed more relaxed it was quite obvious that they did not want to partake in the practical explanation. Volunteers came to the front and looked quite apprehensive. The same routine is followed with regards to the symbols used to explain our pain and discomfort. This congregation also seemed sceptical when the the participants were anointed.

Overall the congregants seemed to have enjoyed the experience. However, during the sessions where the researcher preached specifically on the issue of lament in liturgy the reactions of each one of the participating congregations were quite different.

In URCSA-Z a completely different experience was observed. People seemed to be at ease. During the sermon, when lament was explained, people were agreeing with the researcher in an audible manner. In the tradition of this church, two congregants are invited to pray after the conclusion of the sermon. An older gentleman prayed and then a young woman. She completely broke down in tears during her prayer. There was a quite and holy atmosphere present during her prayer.

The reaction to the invitation of the researcher for participation in the liturgy was very quick. People were willing to participate and they seemed to have enjoyed the experience. The researcher anointed the participants, including the presiding minister and his wife. People were at ease and a quiet atmosphere existed in the church. It would seem that, in general, the symbolism and ritual were more meaningful in the black congregation than in the other participating congregations. There was a feeling of warmth and appreciation for the introduction of the symbols, especially the candles and the anointing.

Throughout my direct observations in this congregation, I have noticed that these congregants are not in a hurry to end their worship service. They provide a safe space for each one and they are quite welcoming to everyone, in particular any guests that might be in their midst. The minister regularly makes altar calls and then the entire congregation responds positively to this call. Colourful cushions are used where people can kneel and where the minister listens to the prayer request and then offer a special prayer for the person. While this process is going on the entire congregation sings and an atmosphere of community exists.

Interviews

During the interviews with the presiding ministers in the participating congregations the following viewpoints came through very clearly:

- i) people regard prayer as the only space in which they can lament;
- ii) we need to encourage people to take their pain and their joy to the Lord
- iii) religious leaders play a crucial role in congregant's understanding of lament in liturgy;
- iv) lament in liturgy must happen – it is not negotiable. It should not just happen by chance, but our liturgies must be constructed in such a manner that it is incorporated in a more blatant way;
- v) we need to equip congregants so they are able to support people who publicly lamented in our worship services;
- vi) there is a willingness amongst most congregants to make a paradigm shift with regards to how we do things in our liturgies;
- vii) our religious leaders need to understand that lament is an integral part of being human, and also in our relationship with God;

- viii) our religious leaders will need to make a paradigm shift regarding their understanding about lament in liturgy and also how lament can be incorporated in the liturgy;

During the interviews it became clear that religious leaders need to play a much bigger role with regards to the understanding and re-introduction of lament in the liturgy. If they are reluctant to incorporate this element in worship services, then the liturgy will be so much poorer. For Hamman, a leader who wants to empower congregants, need to be able “*to recognize, name and grief their own losses first, so that they can be available to their congregation’s grief*”.¹⁶⁰ A leader who is unwilling to admit their own vulnerability will struggle to permit their congregants to lament in a safe space in church.

2.8. Conclusion

Against this background it became clear that people do understand the concept of lament and would be willing to have more exposure to it in the liturgy during services. In addition, during one of the interviews with the ministers, he alluded to the fact that including a process of lament in a service shows the vulnerability and needs of the people. After the service, these people need to be assisted to come to terms with their challenges. If congregants are not trained in this regard, this process will become the responsibility of the minister again or alternatively, these vulnerable people end up with no concrete support system from the side of the church. So even though it is important to acknowledge the pain and challenges that people and communities go through, systems should be put in place where they can be supported after the church service has concluded.

An interesting observation was made in all three congregations. The language of lament was used quite frequently in prayers. People seem to be at ease to verbalise their pain and suffering during prayer, but when they were confronted with it in another manner, they seemed uncomfortable. When we pray to God and ask for change in our circumstances, it is because we know that God helped us, or someone else, in the past. So when we ask God to change our

¹⁶⁰ See Hamman, J. 2005. *When Steeples Cry: Leading congregations through loss and change*. The Pilgrim Press: Cleveland. 2005, 25

present circumstances and our future, it is because we have looked into the past and we have seen what a miracle-working God we serve.

Against this background, it is hard to accept that lament is not practised more often in our church, specifically the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The people belonging to this church experienced traumatic events in the past. They protested against an unjust political system. They prayed for change and they were actively involved in the change that they so desperately wanted. They prayed, they lamented, and God answered. And now, when there are still so many injustices surrounding us? Why are we not beating our fists against God's chest, lamenting the circumstances in which we find ourselves? Why are we not reminding God of what God was able to do for us in the past?

Cilliers describes a number of reasons for the reduction of lament in our preaching and worship. These are:

- i) *"we suffer from a form of Greek stoicism – unspoken belief that Christians should not complain;*
- ii) *the success-driven society;*
- iii) *the soteriological background – confession of sin has become the Christianized form of the lament;*
- iv) *the syndrome of silence could be linked to our tendency to neglect large portions of the Bible in our preaching;*
- v) *the possible reduction of the texts that we do use*
- vi) *Misunderstanding of Christian "patience" tempts us into silence in the face of suffering?*
- vii) *Lament presupposes certain God images with which we feel uncomfortable"*¹⁶¹.

Despite the above reasons that Cilliers has provided, it makes sense that each community of faith would have to investigate why lament is not practised more often. They would need to establish what is happening in their liturgies at present, and if lament does not have an integral place, how could they re-introduce lament in a more obvious manner. Osmer makes a very important comment when he reiterates that religious leaders need to continue to grow

¹⁶¹ See Cilliers, J. 2007. Preaching as language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS. In *Preaching as a language of hope. Studia Homiletica* 6, Cas Vos, Lucy L. Hogan and Johan H. Cilliers (eds.), Pretoria: Pretoria Book House 2007, 160-162

intellectually so that they are able to assist congregants' in their journey to make sense of what is happening in their lives.¹⁶² Suffice to say that this intellectual growth would also assist congregants to ascertain what is happening in their liturgies and how they could embrace new concepts. Osmer continues to reiterate that the spirituality of these religious leaders could be described by way of three qualities, namely thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation and wise judgment.¹⁶³

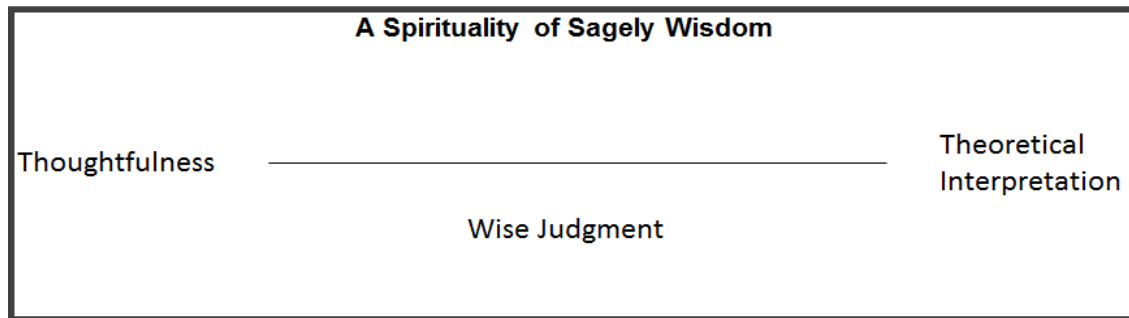


Figure 2 Source Osmer 2008:82

For Osmer, these three qualities are part of the process needed to be able to interpret correctly what is happening in the lives of congregants. Through your thoughtfulness you interact in a sensitive manner and you take time to reflect on the circumstances of the people in order to get a better insight in the situation as a whole.¹⁶⁴ Theoretical interpretation gives us the opportunity to draw on other disciplines, such as the sciences, to give us a better understanding of the situation that we are investigating.¹⁶⁵ Through wise judgment the right course of action for a particular situation can be determined and this is only possible if the circumstances are understood correctly.¹⁶⁶

In the next three chapters, the focus will be on Osmer's normative task, namely "what should be going on?" A discussion on the context and character of lament, biblical groundings as well as theological constructions of lament will take place.

¹⁶² See Osmer, R. 2008. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2008, 81-86

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 82

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 82

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 83

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84

Chapter 3

Context and character

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with a discussion of the results of the analysed data. The chapter was modelled around the first task of Practical Theology, namely the descriptive-empirical task as referred to by Richard Osmer. This particular task deals with the question, “What is going on?” This question is given attention through the use of field research, questionnaires as well as interviews. The field research, as described in chapter 1 and chapter 2, explores the presence of lament in liturgy. The second, reflective task proposed by Osmer was also given attention to through some discussions of the data.

In chapter 3 the focus is turned to the normative task which mainly deals with the question, “What should be going on?” Examples of lament, from, but also from other than the Christian tradition, are explored. This is important because the Christian tradition is not the only one that relies on lament to express sorrow and suffering. In her book *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation* Nancy Lee gives insight into a wide range of cultures that make use of two genres of lament, namely dirges (funeral songs) or lament prayers.¹ These dirges and lament prayers assume various forms depending on the language and the culture in which they are used. Some of these forms are poems, prayers, songs and sacred texts, to name but a few.

This section looks at lament under the following headings:

- Embodiment of lament
- The voice of the church
- Lament for two innocent lives

¹ See Lee, N. 2010. *Lyrics of lament: From tragedy to transformation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2010, 32-70. Lee recognizes and refers to Israel’s laments to the God of Israel. Their lament is one of displacement and of exile. But Lee also speaks of laments by the people of Sudan, India and New Orleans. She refers to the people of Africa, Asia and the Americas. She tries to give insight into the lament of these rich and diverse traditions and cultures. Lee journeys between the Bible and other ancient sacred literature to show how lament was incorporated but she shows persuasively how we might recover lament as an important expression of our faith today.

- Lament in poetry
- Lament in songs
- Lament in the aesthetic and
- Lament in the URCSA hymn book.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a view into the practices of lament in different genres. This would create a better understanding with regards to the statements made in the hypothesis in chapter 1.

3.2. Embodiment of lament

Even though, in most cases, lament is performed or spoken, we should not forget about people and/or organizations that embody lament silently. In South Africa, the Black Sash² is an example of such silent embodiment. Lee³ also mentions the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.⁴ These women are inspiring each other, across cultures and continents, when they “protest” for what they believe in. Women are of course not the only examples. In South Africa we also have the example of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela⁵ and many other social justice leaders who were imprisoned or placed under house arrest for many years for political disagreement. These men and women gave years of their lives to the struggle so that we can live in a free, democratic society today.

Lee has an interesting and bold understanding of lament. She articulates it as follow:

lament, in essence, provides a cathartic vehicle for human beings to
express all aspects of suffering and to help maintain the value and

² An independent, non-governmental human rights organisation that has been working for justice and equality in South Africa for the past 55 years – <http://www.blacksash.org.za> (Accessed 17 July 2013). Currently the organisation is working in areas in the social protection arena, specifically focusing on children and woman.

³ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation*. 2010, 34

⁴ *The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* was a group of Argentine women who organised marches in 1977 at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires. These marches were organised as a protest action against the disappearance of their children during a period in their country's history known as the *Dirty War*.

⁵ Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 to the Madiba clan in Mvezo, Transkei. As a young boy he dreamed of making a contribution to the freedom struggle of his people. He completed his primary school in Qunu and studied for his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Fort Hare. After a long road to freedom, Nelson Mandela was eventually inaugurated on 10 May 1994 as South Africa's first democratically elected president. See <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/biography> (accessed 08 August 2013).

dignity of one's humanity under hardship, if possible. Lament is, and not secondarily, a call to bring attention to injustice, an anguished plea for respite and consolation, an appeal for intervention not only to one's deity, but to one's community, and to the world community.⁶

This understanding grabbed my attention anew. It made me realize that lament is not just for the "ears of God" alone but also for our fellow human beings. I had been so focused on lament being addressed to God that I had neglected the effects of our lament on our communities and the world community. Confronted with this understanding of Lee, in conjunction with the embodiment of lament, it made sense that intervention into our suffering does not only come from God, but it could also come from our fellow brother and sister, whether in my own community, faith community or even the world community.

When we suffer in our communities due to injustices or hardships such as violence, substance abuse, or other, we could and should lament together. This is exactly what we read in 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, especially verse 26 which reads *"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."*⁷ This affirms that the pain that is suffered by any one member is actually the pain of all and it calls for lamenting together. This resonates with the theme of this dissertation on lament in liturgy where the members of the body of Christ lament together with the ones that are suffering. During the turbulent times of apartheid in South Africa, this was famously known as "an injury to one is an injury to all". Meaning that an individual's pain is everybody's pain and inevitably it requires a process of lament in order to trigger the process of healing that we so desperately need in our country.

We could protest against these abnormal situations that are tearing our communities apart. And these protests could take the form of vocal or silent embodiment. Our circumstances might not change overnight but we could experience an emotional transformation through our communal lament that just might strengthen us not to give up. Lee also reiterates that our

⁶ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation*. 2010, 27

⁷ The Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011. Zondervan: Michigan.

plea for justice is not to God alone but also to our fellow human beings. The hope is therefore that those who learn of the injustices “*are asked to respond with compassionate justice*”.⁸

Lamenting alone or as part of a community gives us the opportunity to hold on to God, even though we are not getting answers from God. In fact, we do not understand why we are suffering the way that we do. We do not understand God. This gives rise to the age-old discussion of the question of *theodicy* – when we attempt to answer the question of why a good God would allow the demonstration of evil, i.e. the suffering of God’s children. The South African Theologian, Jaap Durand, wrestles with this issue in his book *Die Sonde: Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek*. He comes to the conclusion that suffering is in fact a puzzle, the puzzle of sin. And if you look at *theodicy* in this way then it becomes a question that you are unable to answer. It brings you to a borderline situation in which you are dumbfounded; a situation in which you are unable to talk about your pain.⁹ So in fact, it brings you into a state of lament. In the understanding of the researcher, silence in fact does form part of lament – even as words do. Through silences, words, perhaps only groans, we hold on to God, a God whom we do not understand, and yet, a God who might be the only One able to change our suffering.

In South Africa we are accustomed to see communities stand together and protest, in most cases for service delivery. They may not be lamenting *per se* but they are in solidarity with each other, trying to convince the government to make positive changes in their circumstances, trusting that their protests will make authorities, and those responsible for their anguish, take action. This is how we should stand together as Christians in our lament over the injustices in our country.

The wave of violence, the corruption and the hostility amongst people that we are experiencing at present in our country does not only call for communal lament “in silence” but it also calls for Christians and churches to break their silence amidst all this turmoil. After the tragic death of mine workers at Marikana¹⁰, church leaders tabled a document in which

⁸ Ibid., 99

⁹ See Durand, J. 1978. *Die Sonde: Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek*. Goodwood: Nasionale Boekdrukkery. 1978, 113

¹⁰ On 16 August 2012, the violent actions between the South African Police Service, the Marikana miners, Lonmin security as well as The National Union of Mineworkers resulted in the deaths of 34 mine workers. Additional workers

they speak out against the Marikana massacre, but also against injustices that we are experiencing in our country. The Church Leaders document, titled *The Church speaks....for such a time as this* laments the suffering of the South African people. Church Leaders lamented and said as leaders we need to speak out against things that do not conform to the virtues that we as Christians believe in. They continue to say that “*we see this moment as a moment to effectively and decisively deal with the wounds and bring about the healing of our country.*”¹¹

3.3. The voice of the church

Another example of churches speaking out is when religious leaders announced a “Procession of Witness”¹² from District Six to Parliament. The announcement was done formally at a news conference by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of Cape Town, supported by Maulana Abdul-Khaliq Allie, secretary-general of the Muslim Judicial Council, and Christian leaders including the national moderator of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa and president of the World Council of Churches, the Revd Dr Mary-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel. Even though they were not present, The Union of Orthodox Synagogues also sent a message of support, as did the Western Cape moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church. This clearly shows the ecumenical nature of the procession.

Through this procession, religious leaders wanted to defend the role of the Public Protector and also express concern for issues affecting communities in Cape Town. The church leaders made it clear that they witness on a daily basis the inequality, corruption, poverty, gangsterism and abuse in our country. They alluded to the fact that as a nation we are in pain and that we should raise the trumpet and proclaim a time to celebrate and lament. We are able to celebrate because we are living in a new South Africa. However, we also need to lament because this freedom is threatened by self-centred wickedness in pockets of our

were also injured during this time. See <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/marikana-massacre-16-august-2012> (Accessed 19 November 2014).

¹¹ See *The Church speaks....for such a time as this....* 2012, 1-2. See [http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC 2012 DOCS/DEC 2012/The church speaks_Final 30 11 2011.pdf](http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC%202012%20DOCS/DEC%202012/The%20church%20speaks_Final%2030%2011%202011.pdf) (Accessed 18 November 2014).

¹² The procession took place on Saturday, 19th April 2014 at 10h00. It started at Keizergracht Street in District Six and ended at Parliament. Archbishop Thabo Makgoba addressed the crowd outside Parliament and directed pertinent questions to President Jacob Zuma about burning issues in the country. See <http://www.nrasd.org.za/2014/04/24/procession-of-witness> (Accessed 06 November 2014).

society. This was a clear example of how the church should acknowledge the pain and suffering that communities are experiencing. *The Church speaks....for such a time as this* document also alluded to the fact that while we lament on issues that are taking place in our country, “at the same time, we also rejoice that there are voices within the faith community who are engaged in certain actions that reveal the best of our prophetic and pastoral traditions.”¹³

What was also thought-provoking was Lee’s idea of what it would mean if “we were to return to the ancient practice of composing a song whenever someone died” as well as performing it in the neighbourhood or at our religious gatherings.¹⁴ What would this mean for us here in South Africa? In Africa? In the world? All over the world people die on a daily basis, often not from natural causes. Many people fight for different causes today and in most cases violence¹⁵ is used as a means of getting the message across to governments and all other parties concerned. And through these violent protests many lose their lives.

In the case of South Africa, examples that can be cited are the already mentioned Marikana massacre as well as the bitter struggle we had against apartheid. In both instances many lost their lives and many of these could possibly have been the breadwinners in their families. In the case of the Marikana massacre this was certainly true. The faith community, organisations in society as well as foreign countries spoke out against the injustices of apartheid. In a strong voice of lament, the then DRMC and now the URCSA pleads through its Belhar Confession,

that in a world full of injustice and enmity God is in a special
way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged, and
that God calls the Church to follow God in this, that God
brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry,
that God frees the prisoners and restores sight to the blind,
that God supports the downtrodden, protects the strangers,

¹³ See *The Church speaks....for such a time as this....* 2012, 2. See [http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC 2012 DOCS/DEC 2012/The church speaks_Final 30 11 2011.pdf](http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC%202012%20DOCS/DEC%202012/The%20church%20speaks_Final%2030%2011%202011.pdf) (Accessed 18 November 2014)

¹⁴ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation*. 2010, 47

¹⁵ On the 22nd July 2011 a man single-handedly killed many civilians in Norway by detonating a bomb in Oslo and killing seven people. He then continued to kill as many as eighty-five teenagers on Utoya Island. Anders Behring Breivik describes himself as “a Christian and a conservative with an interest in body-building and freemasonry”. Breivik participated passionately on right-wing websites and he argued fiercely against multiculturalism; stressing that people from different cultures cannot live together. (City Press, 24 July 2011).

helps the orphans and widows and blocks the path of the
ungodly.¹⁶

The church must stand where God stands, with the poor. The Belhar Confession is not only used in liturgical services for praising God, but it is also used for lamenting against all forms of injustices, disunity and lack of reconciliation amongst Christians and society. The Marikana massacre did not only leave South Africans lamenting over the tragic deaths of these mine workers, but their families still have to live with this loss for the rest of their lives. These surviving family members are part of the faith community and need to be comforted in these trying times. This is also in line with our believe as set out in the Belhar Confesion when it says that *“the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”*¹⁷

How many songs would we have to compose for the people of Norway, for the people who are dying of hunger in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia? How many songs can we compose today for our people in South Africa who are still suffering – almost twenty years into democracy? Many had hoped that democracy would mean a better life for them. How many songs would we have to compose to protest against the rape of our young children, and the rape and abuse of our women?

3.4. Lament for two innocent lives

Ackermann¹⁸ insists correctly that we have much about which to lament. Reading reports about abuse, rape and corruption in our country on a daily basis could leave us in total despair. Heidi Swart¹⁹, a reporter for the *Mail & Guardian* wrote an article about the gruesome

¹⁶ See Botha, J. and Naudé, P. 2011. The Belhar Confession (1986): in Johan Botha and Piet Naudé: *Good News to Confess: The Belhar Confession and the road of acceptance*. Bible Media, Wellington. 2011, 22

¹⁷ Ibid., 22

¹⁸ See Ackermann, D.M. 1996. On hearing and lamenting: Faith and Truth-telling. In Botman, H.R. and Petersen, R.M. (eds.) *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*. 1996, 47-56

¹⁹ The article was published on the website of Mail & Guardian on 15 February 2013. See <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-02-15-00-will-anene-booyens-brutal-rape-and-murder-shake-the-nation-into-action> (Accessed 08 August 2013).

rape of Anene Booysen (a 17 year old Bredasdorp teenager) and Jyoti Singh Pandey (a 23 year old student who was studying physiotherapy in New Delhi). Pandey was attacked by six men on the 16th December 2012. She was gang-raped and beaten with an iron rod and left for dead on the side of the road after the attack. She died of her injuries on 29 December 2012. On 2 February 2013, Booysen was found by a security guard. She had also been gang-raped. Parts of her intestines were lying beside her. She later died of her injuries.

Swart had the following to say about the way the Indian and the South African nations reacted to these vicious crimes. *“There were some similarities in the public reaction to the two attacks. But in India, the public outcry became a high-pitched wail that spread across the region”*.²⁰ The people of India came together as one to protest against this monstrous crime. They made use of songs and music as well as posters to bring the message across that something drastically needed to change in India. The protesters even went as far as clashing with the police to make their voices heard. Cities and towns were lamenting loudly about this sad state of affairs.

In comparison, the turnout in support for Booysen was different. The attack was widely condemned by government, the African National Congress Women’s league and many other civil society organisations. However, the protests that took place in South Africa were on a much smaller scale than those in India. Statistics South Africa recorded in the census data of 2001²¹ that 79.8% of South Africans are affiliated to Christian churches. A further 3.7% are affiliated to other religions. These religious institutions are already existent in different communities, and they have the most extensive reach within these communities. The religious leaders are also aware of what is happening in these communities. If this is the case, why do we not hear wailing emerging from our communities when these appalling acts occur? Why do we not take a more prominent stand as churches? Or have we been paralysed by the sad state of affairs in our country? When confronted with the different ways in which people cry out against injustice, we might wonder why South Africans seem to be lukewarm in our

²⁰ See: <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-02-15-00-will-anene-booyens-brutal-rape-and-murder-shake-the-nation-into-action> (Accessed 08 August 2013).

²¹ Statistics South Africa 2004. *Census 2001*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. The question of religion was not included on the Census 2011 form due to low priority. See the frequently asked questions (question 31) on the website of Statistics South Africa <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census2011/faq.asp> (Accessed 20 November 2014).

response. It is not that we do not protest against our circumstances, but we seem to lose the will to continue until the issues have been resolved.

The Indian people stood up as a nation and protested after the brutal rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey. Their action, as a nation, by far outweighed what happened in South Africa after the rape and death of Anene Booysen. Why is this the case? After the death of Anene, we have had many other instances where young children were brutally raped. A nine year-old girl from Delft, in the Western Cape, has even been set alight by the rapist.²² Sadly, she later died from her injuries. The communities in which these horrific acts took place protested against these brutal acts, but South Africa hardly comes to a standstill for these incidents. We do not have a scenario where towns all over the country come to a standstill in protest of these despicable acts of violence. We do not stand up as a nation and make our voices heard for the sake of our children and our women.

Are we as a nation so tired of all the violence and corruption that it does not really touch us anymore? Or is it a subject that is not so important to the media and therefore gets coverage only while the news is still “fresh”? What did we do as church - not just around the time of deaths of these two young women, but also afterwards, when the rape and killing of innocent babies and children continued in our country? What did we do as a church? We hear the reports week after week and the communities keep on protesting about these incidents, but not once do we as a country – like the people of India - say “enough is enough!”

Each year, on the 9th August we celebrate National Women’s Day in South Africa. On this day in 1956, 20000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to petition against legislation that would require African persons to carry a “pass”. During the apartheid era, this was the identification document intended to restrict the movement of an African person. From 25 November to 10 December each year we also have the “16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children” campaign, driven by government. It aims to convey the message to communities that violence has a negative impact on women and children. This

²² See <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/9-year-old-still-critical-raped-set-alight> (Accessed 24 April 2014).

year, 2014, Cabinet adopted the theme: “Count me in: Together moving a non-violent South Africa forward”.²³ In her address, Minister Susan Shabangu²⁴, voiced the pain that we are going through as a country because of the ongoing violence against women and children. She alluded to the fact that even though this campaign has a high level of awareness, the pandemic of violence

remains a cause for concern in our society. Its ugly face and the level of brutality makes it worse because it knows no age, it knows no colour, and leaves pain and permanent scars in society and leads to family breakdown.²⁵

The minister’s speech ended with a cry for a better South Africa.

There are many role players who work together in this campaign, including government, the business sector, civil society organisations and religious organisations. Through this campaign South Africans have been made aware of the abuse that happens around them, and support systems for victims and survivors of abuse have been established. But despite these and other efforts, the violence seems to be spiralling out of control in our country.

We also read in Romans 8: 19-21²⁶ that the whole creation of God laments about these injustices and suffering. The creation also feels this pain because it has been neglected and violated by us, human beings. These sentiments are clearly stated in the joint declaration of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern African and the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany titled: *Dreaming A Different World Together. Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth. The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the churches*. Both these churches lament and declare that:

we discern the signs of our times, we hear the cries of your people
and see the wounds of your creation. We are shocked by stories of

²³ See <http://www.gov.za/speech-minister-presidency-women-ms-susan-shabangu-national-debate-16-days-activism-no-violence> (Accessed 24 November 2014).

²⁴ Susan Shabangu is the Minister of Women in the Presidency

²⁵ Ibid., 2

²⁶ ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. [NIV]

injustice worldwide and disturbed by accounts of ecological destruction; we are moved by the experiences of oppression, violence and being violated; experiences of exclusion and marginalization, often of minorities; experience of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.²⁷

These churches further say “*therefore we lament – with cries of your afflicted people and the wounds of your suffering creation... We cry and plead, we sigh and pray together for our broken and threatened world*”.²⁸

It is against this background that the hypothesis in this research is of such importance. However, revisiting and reclaiming of lament alone will not change our circumstances. Ackermann gives two further actions that we need to take in order for lament to have a positive effect. Firstly, we need to “wait in faith”. Secondly, we need to put all our suffering and all our “*acts of love in the communion cup*”.²⁹ In the act of waiting, we might observe the suffering of our brothers and sisters. We might see and hear their laments. While we wait we are also hopeful and we are seeking for the “not yet”; the new and better life that we are hoping for.

The Church speaks....for such a time as this document alludes to this fact when it says “*our most important quality, as those who follow the One who overcame death, is the quality of hope.*”³⁰ The document further “*thanked God that Christian hope frees us from tyranny of the present to imagine a better tomorrow. It affirms that even though the dream of a just, non-racial and prospering democracy is temporarily in eclipse...the people of South Africa ARE capable of rising to reclaim there future. The church’s role is therefore to proclaim the message of faith in action in order to assist everyone to reclaim a future of hope and compassion*”.³¹

²⁷ See Boesak, A., Weusmann, J. & Amjad-Ali, C. (eds.). 2010. *Dreaming A Different World Together. Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth. The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the churches.* 2010, 80

²⁸ Ibid., 80-81

²⁹ See Ackermann, D.M. 1998. A voice was heard in Ramah: A Feminist Theology of Praxis for healing in South Africa. In Ackermann, D.M. and Bons-Storm, R. (eds.), *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context.* Leuven: Peeters. 1998, 97

³⁰ See *The Church speaks....for such a time as this....* 2012, 2-3. See [http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC 2012 DOCS/DEC 2012/The church speaks_Final 30 11 2011.pdf](http://www.sacc.org.za/content/SACC%202012%20DOCS/DEC%202012/The%20church%20speaks_Final%2030%2011%202011.pdf) (Accessed 18 November 2014).

³¹ Ibid., 3

In the words of Dorothy Sölle, lament should also lead us “*out of isolated suffering ... to the solidarity in which change occurs*”.³² While we lament, we should work together as individuals and communities, to enable change around us. We should work together to set our communities free from the enslavement of drug lords, gangsterism, violence, and so much more. We should work together to ensure a just society.

It is a fashionable statement to say that we are living in a “global village” but when we have to solve the problems of this “global village” we realize that we cannot just oversimplify things. The examples mentioned clearly show that these are issues that need to be lamented. Just as there is a “*preoccupation with justice issues*”³³ in the lament psalms, so the justice issues, or rather the injustices that people are suffering in the horn of Africa – and elsewhere – can be lamented.

3.5. Lament in poetry

The singing of anti-apartheid songs³⁴ was not the only way in which people expressed their dismay with an unjust political system. Artists also made use of poetry to address the injustices that black people experienced. These poems clearly described the plight of the people in a moving way. They lamented the awful way in which black South Africans were treated by the government. One example of such a poem is that by South African poet Mzi Mahola.³⁵

WHAT WILL THEY EAT?

Mzi Mahola

There was stormy panic
When the police came
To round up polltax defaulters.

³² See Sölle, D. 1975. *Suffering*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia. 1975, 74

³³ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation*. 2010, 93

³⁴ Contemporary artist, Josh Groban, worked with Ladysmith Black Mambazo and recorded a song called “Weeping”. This song was written in the 1980s by Dan Heymann and it tells of a soldier who was drafted unwillingly into the South African army. See <http://joshgroban.yuku.com/topic/6626> (accessed 01 August 2013).

³⁵ See Mahola, M. 2000. *When rains come*. Plumstead: Carapace Poets. 2000, 22-23

Once more the knowing forest
Hurriedly beckoned
To hide in its bosom
Men of the village.
But uncle was again betrayed
By his arthritic limbs.
Women wailed
Hearts seized by apprehension
And cousin cried
Fear in his little heart.
We had never seen a handcuffed person.

The police returned one day
And we craned our necks for uncle.
But he was not there.
For a long time,
Lasting almost the day,
Grandpa and grandma
Argued with the white policemen.
There was a black one
Well known for torturing
Standing away near the kraal
Like a *skullpanda* .

For the first time I saw tears
In granny's dark face,
Grandpa so furious
It was coming through his nose.
That day no tea,
Cookies or sour milk were served.
In the afternoon the guests left.

Granny was in grief
Parroting a recital,
“What will they eat?
What will my children eat?”

In the evening a man came
To herd all three suckling cattle,
Their calves and a pregnant cow.
He drove them away.
He herded away our wealth,
Our source of nutrition,
Grandfather’s status and pride.
Their value would pay for his son’s freedom.
A complete invalid.

Grief was choking my throat.
Would they know their special names?
Would they graze them in lucerne?
Give them chaff and salt?
What of the green acres at home?
The calabashes,
Would they now be turned upside down?
What would we milk, feed the dogs on?
We would never again
Watch them grazing in the field.

For many seasons
Our home lay
Under the roof of sorrow.
Now I know
That from a dog’s withered back

You can tell that
There's hunger in a home.

This poem tells the story of suffering and of economic oppression. It also shows how the suffering of human beings has a negative effect and touches everyone and everything close to them. Even the animals suffer in this process. This poem depicts a story that is still very relevant in South Africa today, as well as in many other parts of the world. The loss of wealth might not be through an abusive political system, but the suffering continues.

Another poem, written by Antjie Krog, laments the death of Nelson Rolihlahla.³⁶ Mandela, a son of the African soil. South Africa knew that Madiba³⁷ will not live forever. He sacrificed his whole life for the freedom of this nation. This he also reiterated in his “an ideal for which I’m prepared to die” speech.³⁸ A snippet of this speech, which was a clear indication of his political beliefs, is as follows:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.³⁹

³⁶ This is the isiXhosa birthname of Nelson Mandela. It means “pulling the branch of a tree” but more commonly it means “troublemaker”.

³⁷ This is the other name that Nelson Mandela was sometimes referred to; his clan name. In the Xhosa tradition a clan name is even more important than a surname because it refers to one's ancestors.

³⁸ This was Nelson Mandela’s statement at the opening of the defense case in the Rivonia trial. Instead of testifying at the trial Nelson Mandela preferred to make a speech from the dock. The Rivonia trial took place between 1963 and 1964. Political leaders from the African National Congress were charged and convicted on broad charges. Another consequence of this trial was the life imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and other convicted defendants. Mandela eventually served 27 years in prison of which a great part was on Robben Island (an island used for the isolation of mainly political prisoners during the apartheid era).

³⁹ See <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/i-am-prepared-to-die> (Accessed 19 May 2014).

However, the shock of receiving the news of his death was almost too much to bear for this nation. Many believed that the country would be in utter turmoil after his death as they believed Madiba still remained the true leader of this nation.

Lament at the Death of Mandela⁴⁰

1.

Underground a reef has shifted
the earth stumbles
unsettled the sky gasps
it plunges backwards
leaving us colder poorer lonelier

when his breath left him in the night
the stars reeled as if asphyxiating
because everything was entangled now
wrestling with death
death and his death alone

time has turned to grief
we're standing in a big shadow
glass breaks through us; stones splinter
our thoughts flee in desperate churning groups
pegging the ground like assegais quivering

in Qunu the cattle refuse to leave the kraal
at Lusikisiki the fish lie close to the surface
in Mveso the bustards make no sound

2.

the thought of Mandela wrenches our insides
(we never wanted to see his dying body)
we cannot even open our mouths
(we never wanted to see his dying body)
to begin talking about his death is to talk about his deeds
(we never wanted to see his dying body)
about his blood arrowing like a jaguar
(we never wanted to see his dying body)

⁴⁰ See <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2013/12/15/sunday-read-antjie-krogs-poem-lament-at-the-death-of-mandela/> (accessed 10 February 2014). The poem is based on the Lesotho lament about the death of King Moshoeshoe 1. The lament, *Lithokhokiso tsa Moshoeshoe le tse ling*, was originally written by David Cranmer Theko Bereng.

about his work, his pliant power
(we never wanted to see his dying body)
the forgiving cartilage of his flowering skull
(we never wanted to see his dying body)
the battering ram of his tongue
moulding interlocking futures to a core

we can not do justice to Our Big One
we do not want to see his vulnerable body
we do not want to see it
we do not want him to be dead

3.
in the footpaths, on the pavements, in buses along the roads
we bundle together, we the ordinary ones
we sprinkle our tears over him
words and songs stream from our eyes
we sprinkle it over the dead body
of the Fearless Warrior who once ruled us
we sprinkle tears over the opened blood of Mandela
we ordinary ones do not wash him with water, but with songs

with grief we take his body in our thoughts
we wash it, we bathe it
with hands that tremble, we touch his legacy
we pass him on, from hand to hand
high above our heads
the man who saved us from ourselves
who gave us back to one another

oh singing blood of the son of uNosekeni
oh handpalms of Mveso full of stars and rain
oh arms of Qunu embracing a country's deepest wound

4.
on the day we bury Mandela, the brooks stop flowing
on the day we bury Mandela, the trees stop swaying in the wind
on the day we bury Mandela, the sun loses its power
on the day we bury the One-Who-Can-Never-Die
the earth becomes full of dust
the sky thunders in a different way
the sun groans green

yes, when we bury Mandela
we bury our Big-Binder-Together
he whose hands ladled peace in the world

5.

are you talking now about the Big-Strong-Fiery-One?
are you saying that Mandela is dead?
are you saying that our Big One has left us?
this nation that he instructed since that day
when black and white assegais shimmered against each other

awu no, I refuse!
he will not die and we keep on living
why do we live if he has died?
no, we only bury the bones; our Big One lives
the Binder-Together is not dead, he sleeps
the one who broke the revengeful assegais
and bound them together, is just sleeping
- the Big One has moved in among the ancestors

nobody's larynx can sing Mandela's song until its ending
nobody will ever de-gloss our Great-Binder-Together for us
nobody exceeds him in courage

no leader has ever been so loved by his people

6.

At the grave of Mandela

here he rests now
the one who bound us together
may he find himself always in the fullness of peace
he from the soil of our land
the singing blood of us all

he sleeps now
he who gave to everybody
with a hand that was used to give
he who never failed to share his lion heart

"If he was remarkable, so are we!"
we ordinary ones say
"Let us now care for one another!"
we whisper at the grave of the Sharer, the Open-handed-One
"let us celebrate our connectedness!"
we plead to those in the special seats

7.

the rivers stop rushing, when we lower the coffin
the bushes against the mountains stop trembling,
when we lower the coffin
the dry grass stop rustling, when we lower the coffin
the vegetation stop growing, when we lower the coffin
the birds stop singing, when we lower the coffin

the land opens and takes him to her in utter silence

everything is entangled now
accepting death
death and his death alone

beloved Mandela, bless us, your children
let your life leave its fingerprint on all of us
you are the embodiment of the world's yearning for goodness
you were our bestest face

it will be a long time before we ordinary ones
will again hold in our mortal arms a person so noble
someone so healing and stubbornly beautiful
so tough of disposition
so sternly inclusive of principle
so elegant and sweeping of heart

Tsamaya Hantle Barque of our Dreams
Ntate Moholo
Khotso! Pula! Nala!

by Antjie Krog⁴¹

Nelson Mandela passed away at 20h50 on 5th December 2013. Messages of condolences were pouring in after President Jacob Zuma announced his death. The world at large mourned the death of this icon. Headlines, as well as social media, during this time tried to mirror the sense of loss that people all over the world were experiencing.

⁴¹ Antjie Krog is a poet, writer, journalist and extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape.

Global Post: Australian politicians lament over Nelson Mandela's death⁴²

Unifor is Canada's newest union: Media Advisory - Unifor laments death of leader Nelson Mandela⁴³

Football club FC Barcelona: FC Barcelona laments loss of Nelson Mandela⁴⁴

Social Media: Celebrities Lament Nelson Mandela's Death on Twitter⁴⁵

Anglican Leaders Lament Mandela's Passing⁴⁶

The poem of lament that Antjie Krog wrote touched upon so many facets of his life. Throughout the poem, she reiterates how even nature was gasping with his passing. She alluded to the cycle of nature that was disturbed by this news. Nature even comes to a standstill when the earth receives his body. The refrain “*we never wanted to see his dying body*” is an outcry against the loss that we are suffering. In fact, we are refusing this sad news and we do not want to be consoled, like Rachel⁴⁷ who did not want to be comforted in her hour of grief. The examples that Krog gives shows how the natural order has been disturbed because of this great soul that we have lost. Through the refusal of accepting his death, we are actually keeping his legacy alive. Even in death, we are reminded of Mandela's good deeds; we are reminded of each other. Writing a poem in honour of Nelson Mandela is exactly what Nancy Lee⁴⁸ was referring to when she suggested that we return to the ancient practice of composing a song when someone passes on.

In writing a poem or composing a song for someone, we inevitably think about the legacy of that person. Mostly we want to remember the good qualities because we do not want to speak

⁴² See <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/131205/australian-politicians-lament-over-nelson-mandelas-death> (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴³ See <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/media-advisory---unifor-laments-death-of-leader-nelson-mandela-234671141.html> (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴⁴ See <http://www.fcbarcelona.com/club/detail/article/fc-barcelona-laments-loss-of-nelson-mandela> (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴⁵ See <http://www.latinospot.com/articles/32181/20131207/celebrities-lament-nelson-mandelas-death-on-twitter.htm> (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴⁶ See <http://www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=18330#.Uwx1exsaLcs> (Accessed 25 February 2014).

⁴⁷ See Matthew 2:16-18

⁴⁸ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From tragedy to transformation*. 2010, 47

ill of the dead. Composing a song for someone with the stature of Nelson Mandela could be quite a daunting task. He sacrificed his life, and his family, for the sake of a country, which he loved dearly. His legacy will live forever.

3.6. Lament in songs

In South Africa, a Zulu song called “*Thula Sizwe*”⁴⁹ was sung during the era of Apartheid. As with many other struggle and freedom songs, it provided encouragement and hope for the masses who had to endure the harsh realities of Apartheid⁵⁰ on a daily basis. The strength that was obtained through their faith is made clear in this song.

<i>Thula Sizwe</i>	<i>Hush nation</i>
<i>Ungabokala</i>	<i>Do not cry</i>
<i>Ujehova Wakho</i>	<i>Our God</i>
<i>Uzokunqobela</i>	<i>Will protect us</i>
<i>Inkululeko</i>	<i>Freedom</i>
<i>Sizoyithola</i>	<i>We will get it</i>
<i>Ujehova Wakho</i>	<i>Our God</i>
<i>Uzokunqobela</i>	<i>Will protect us</i>

Suffice to say that some of the struggle songs in South Africa are causing quite a stir today since many people feel that the era of these songs has passed.⁵¹ Other opinions are that these songs are part of our struggle legacy and should be kept alive for posterity.

⁴⁹ See http://www.sternsmusic.com/disk_info.php?id=WRASS062 (Accessed 28 July 2011); lyrics quoted from <http://singafrica.londongt.org/index.php?page=thulaSizwe> (Accessed 28 July 2011).

⁵⁰ Apartheid was a government policy of race-separation and oppression in South Africa in which black South Africans had to endure a system where they were classified as second-class citizens. Through this system black people were oppressed in all spheres of society. They were not allowed to go to the same schools as white people, use the same public transportation, live in the same suburbs, etc. Many black communities were forced out of their homes and forced into impoverished townships. Black people were also forced to carry passbooks wherever they went.

⁵¹ In 2010, a civil society group called Afriforum, challenged the African National Congress Youth League President Julius Malema’s singing of the anti-apartheid era song “shoot the boer”, Afriforum took him to court arguing that the singing of this song could fuel violence in the country, particularly against the white farmers. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/02/julius-malema-south-africa-banned-song> (Accessed 29 July 2011); See also <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-05-16-judge-shoot-the-boer-is-incitement-to-murder> (Accessed 29 July 2011).

Zahara⁵² and well-known South African poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli, have joined forces to write a touching tribute in honour of Madiba. The song is titled “Tata⁵³ Madiba Father of the Nation” and part of it is written in the Xhosa language.

“Nelson Mandela/ Tata Madiba/ Father of the Nation/ Qawe la maqawe/ Akekho o fana naye/ (Hero of heroes/ There’s none like him)”.⁵⁴

Zahara calls Mandela “a man of peace” whilst she remembers his reconciliation efforts. She pays tributes to his sacrifices as well as the nation building which he stood for and worked tirelessly. In a way, she verbalizes what many South Africans feel in their hearts about Tata Madiba. Even though many have never met him, people are aware what this great man sacrificed for this country.

We are affected by what happens in our religious lives, politics in our country as well as finances. We see, and some of us even experience, the violence, the corruption and the marginalisation. We read newspapers, watch the news and we see and experience a country that we did not dream about. And we want to cry out “enough is enough”. Individuals, as well as creation, lament the brokenness of this world.⁵⁵ An important element that we find in the lament prayers is the complaints about injustice or oppression against the lamenter or others. The presence of questions in these lament prayers are also very common. An example can be found in the South African anti-Apartheid folk song “Senzeni Na”. This one question “Senzeni Na, senzeni na” which translates to “What have we done, what have we done?” and it runs through the song in a refrain. In terms of examples in nature we can look at the losing battle that we are fighting in South Africa against the poaching of rhino horns. These majestic animals are killed in such a cruel manner, in order that their horns can be sold on the black market. This is just one example of the cruelty that nature experiences at the hands of greedy

⁵² Zahara, a multiple South African Music Awards artist is a South African singer, songwriter and poet.

⁵³ “Tata” is an isiXhosa word that means “father”. This was a term of endearment and many South Africans, irrespective of their age, called Nelson Mandela “Tata”. He was seen as the father of the nation and therefore this reference.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.citypress.co.za/entertainment/zahara-releases-touching-tribute-to-mandela/> (Accessed 19 May 2014)

⁵⁵ See Romans 8:8-30

men. It becomes clear then that the issue of *justice*, or the complaints about injustice, are always at the forefront where lament is concerned.

I grew up in a tradition where specific hymns were sung at funeral services. Memorial services took place at the home of the deceased every evening, for at least a week, until the funeral. Hymns were chosen very carefully for the Friday night. Usually mourners would gather at the home of the deceased for a night vigil. But on Friday night the body would also be present and this vigil would continue through the night until early the next morning. The chosen hymns spoke of the family's pain, the desperation of losing a loved one as well as the hope that we have as Christians that we will see our loved ones again when Jesus returns. However, these vigils also allowed family and friends to reminisce about the life of the deceased, while also providing an opportunity for families who had not seen each other in years, to get together and build on the relationships.

What stands out about the vigils is the *call-and-response* hymns that were sung. This process involves a lead singer with the rest of the people present responding to a line or half-line with a refrain. This is exactly what Lee also touches upon when she talks about the *dialogical dimension* of laments.⁵⁶ She indicates that this style of lamenting has been documented all over the world. It would appear that the call-and-response element of lament has survived because it enables communities to share their grief and pain. It creates an opportunity for “*someone else's response to one's expression of suffering, someone who comforts and resonates with the pain, and a 'village' or community that shares the burden*”.⁵⁷

Today, this tradition still continues in the rural areas, but it has changed in the urban areas. For one, in some places only a few memorial services are held, and some services do not take place at the family's home. In many instances, the church would be the only venue where services are held. Nowadays, sharing a meal every night during the week prior to the funeral has become neglected, although the custom of sharing a meal after the funeral is still adhered to.

⁵⁶ See Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From tragedy to transformation*. 2010, 51

⁵⁷ Ibid., 51

In Brueggemann's *The Message of the Psalms: A theological commentary*, he looks at Psalms of orientation, Psalms of disorientation as well as Psalms of reorientation.⁵⁸ In his discussion of the Psalms of disorientation, he scrutinises personal lament as well as communal lament. We only need to look around us in our different communities, or read the newspapers to realize that there is no equilibrium and peace in the world that we live in. Despite this, the church continues to "*sing songs of orientation in a world that is increasingly experienced as disoriented*".⁵⁹ One could argue that this is the church's way of acknowledging boldly that God is still in control. Or could it be that the church does not want to acknowledge the disorientation of life?

Brueggemann boldly criticized the church in this regard. He was of the opinion that the actions of the church "*is less an evangelical defiance guided by faith, and much more a frightened, numb denial and deception that does not want to acknowledge or experience the disorientation of life*".⁶⁰ These are harsh words. In a sense I would agree with him especially against the background of the preaching of prosperity gospel. However, there are many churches that are striving to embrace the realities that we are faced with outside the church walls. They form partnerships with organisations and work towards changing their communities for the better. This is done on practical levels, like providing aftercare for children – to keep them safe but also to assist them with homework and provide tutoring facilities in areas with which they are struggling. These efforts should not be ignored.

3.7. Lament in the aesthetic

Can we say "lament and aesthetic" in one sentence? It does not seem logical to have these two words adjacent to each other; they seem to have opposite meanings and effects. Can lament ever be beautiful or appealing? In a sense we can agree that it could be visual but we must take into account that for many lament is a very private process. However, artists expressed

⁵⁸ See Brueggemann, W. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. 1984, 51-88

⁵⁹ Ibid., 51

⁶⁰ Ibid., 51. See also Brueggeman, W. 1974. From hurt to joy, from death to life. *Interpretation* (28):3-19
Brueggemann refers to Israel who were authentic in their life experiences. They realized that their relationship with God could not constitute only praise. Both praise and lament were present in their turbulent relationship with God.

what they were feeling and what they believed the world was experiencing on a daily basis, by portraying the injustices experienced by people, through the form of art that they practise.

For Cilliers, the aesthetics in practical theology functions to allow us to experience the “*imaginative deciphering of meaning in beauty*”.⁶¹ We experience God’s presence amongst us through “*certain embodied encounters*” and through Practical Theological studies we are trying to make sense of these encounters. Aesthetics provides us with a tool to try and decipher these encounters. Cilliers cautions that God’s beauty is layered and complex and it is therefore not possible to approach it in one way. An aesthetical practical theology closes this gap by providing a creative approach in which the deciphering can take place. Cilliers provides an illustration in which he tries to explain the approach.

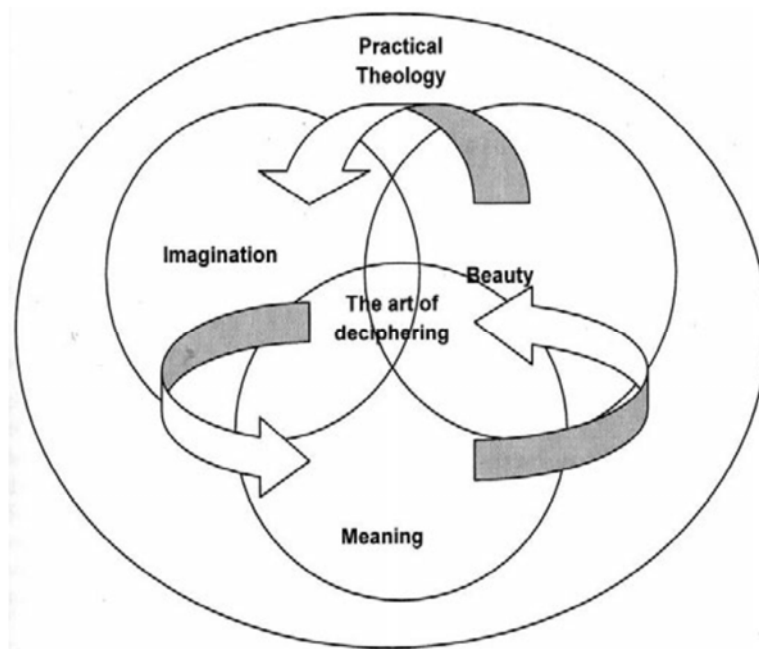


Figure 3. Source: Cilliers 2012:66

The three concepts in question are imagination, beauty and meaning. They do not necessarily follow each other in a chronological order, as indicated in the above figure. However, they do

⁶¹ See Cilliers, J. 2012. *Dancing with Deity: Re-imagining the beauty of worship*. Wellington: Bible Media. 2012, 66

exist in a manner that would equally improve the impact of all the concepts. Cilliers describes it as follows:

We need imagination to decipher beauty, which in turn will ignite imagination. We could therefore talk about the imagination of beautiful meaning, or the meaning of imagined beauty, or the beauty of meaningful imagination, etc. I prefer to call this the beauty of imagined meaning. Whichever way we choose to describe the reciprocal movement, at the centre we find the art of deciphering, which undergirds an aesthetical practical theology.⁶²

Taking into account that we are a nation, and a church, that provides a home to people with various cultural backgrounds we need faith that transcends the social boundaries in order for people to see God's beauty.

In his article *Sounding Salvation: Theological Perspectives on Music as Articulation of Life*⁶³, Cilliers contemplates sound and how it links to soteriology. He alludes to the fact that "*words create worlds*".⁶⁴ These words are perceived by the person on the receiving end to construct the world that he/she lives in. Against the background of lament, we can say that the expression of experienced hurt and pain could in fact be the starting point of creating a different world. The lament articulates what people are experiencing, what they do not want and it also creates an opportunity to verbalise what they are longing for. Cilliers conveys the importance of music in our everyday life and he is of the opinion that words inevitably needs music to be heard.

He refers to the "*salvation that comes to us in the rhythms of our lives*".⁶⁵ These rhythms are made up of sounds and silences. And it is in these in-between spaces, the liminal spaces, that we find comfort. For Cilliers, this comfort is possible because "*it corresponds with the realities of our fragmented existences*".⁶⁶ The sounds that we are exposed to can become divine sounds,

⁶² Ibid., 67

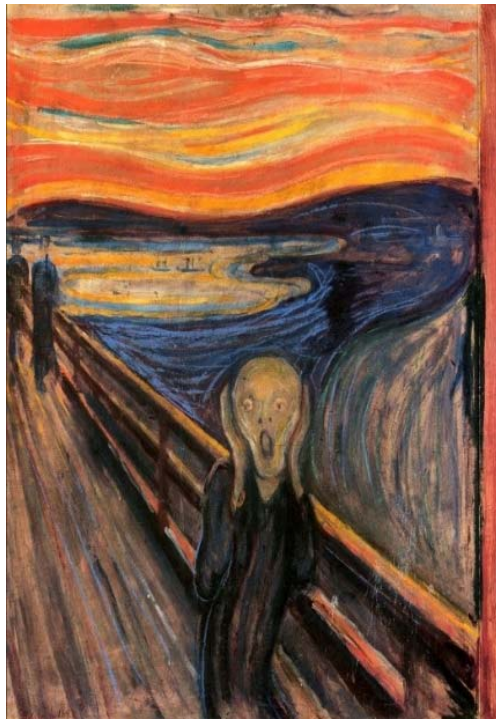
⁶³ See Cilliers, J. 2013. *Sounding Salvation: Theological Perspectives on Music as Articulation of Life*. (Unpublished article)

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1

⁶⁵ Ibid., 12

⁶⁶ Ibid., 12

through the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit. In his article Cilliers refers to a painting called *The Scream* by Edvard Munch and a sculpture by the “Brazilian artist Guido Rocha entitled *The Tortured Christ* (1975)”.⁶⁷



The Scream

The painting depicts fear and terror. Obviously the painting is without sound but the manner in which the artist portrayed this “scream”, renders it almost audible. From the diary entry by Munch regarding this painting a sense of fear is tangible. The background seems to be in constant movement. Even though this is a painting about the feelings of the artist, it also seems to depict the screaming of the suffering that people are experiencing. Against the background of all the atrocities happening in our country on a daily basis, this painting might be appropriate to what many South Africans might be feeling about their personal and communal circumstances. The *scream* of the masses, the oppressed, and the marginalised seems to break through in this portrayal.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 12-15

Regarding the sculpture, one realises that the name *The Tortured Christ* seems to be equally appropriate. The tortured body, the open mouth, obviously screaming, the image of utter despair, recalls the crucified Lord. It gives a glimpse into the sense of hopelessness and despair that was experienced on the cross.



The Tortured Christ

However, Cilliers makes it clear that the screams depicted in these two artworks are fundamentally different. The cry from *The Scream* can be interpreted as fearful and hopeless, while the cry from *The Tortured Christ* is “*the Sound of Salvation*”.⁶⁸ This scream by the crucified One takes up our screams of sorrow, of pain, fear and our lament. This scream signifies that all is not lost.

In the Sol Justitiae chapel at the University of Stellenbosch’s Faculty of Theology, a sculpture is displayed right in the centre at the front of the room. This sculpture, which was created by Prof. Daniel Louw tries to depict suffering and its link with the cross.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15



The Disfigurement of Suffering

Firstly, the sculpture is titled "*The Disfigurement of Suffering*". The symbols used are explained⁶⁹ in the following manner. "The sculpture of rock can represent either a cross or a human body torn apart by suffering. In front of the cross/body, one becomes aware of the fact that Christ did not die 'on' a cross. On the contrary, it was the curse of the cross, the woundedness, the guilt and sin of human beings that killed the suffering Christ. The suffering is a divine act: 'For our sake he made him to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' [II Cor 5:21]. In this cross there is no face. According to Isaiah 53:2 the suffering servant of God had no attractiveness at all, nothing to make us want him.

This man of sorrows was despised and rejected. One would rather turn one's back and look the other way when one goes by [53:3]. He was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was chastised that we might have peace; he was lashed – and we were healed [53:4-5].

⁶⁹ The detailed explanation was obtained from an information leaflet that is available in the chapel of the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University.

The rocks were gathered in the Ceres district district [my place of birth] on the farm Matjiesrivier, just before Karoopoort. I had to shatter the rocks to discover the colour, texture and form.

It was as if God sculpted this cross from the time of creation and it lay there for millions of years, ready to be discovered. Through re-creation, creation has become a piece of art.

According to 1 Corinthians 1:25 the cross is a foolish act. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. In this rock installation, disfigurement and weakness are becoming the power of healing. The barbed wire symbolizes all forms of human suffering. Barbed wire has always been used to separate human beings and to tear them apart.

In concentration camps, during riots and times of war, during the period of apartheid, the barbed wire impounded people. In this piece of art, the barbed wire represents the aesthetics of God. It binds the different parts together in a new unity; it transcends all isolation beyond forms of discrimination and stigmatisation.

The skull [bottom right] is fossilised sea life. It reminds one of the fact that death fossilises life. Connected to the disfigurement of the dying Christ, the cross 'defossilises' death. The piece of rock resembles Golgotha – even the continent of Africa.

Within the woundedness of Christ human beings rediscover their human dignity: to be accepted unconditionally for who they are without the fear of rejection or isolation. The disfigurement of suffering then becomes the embracement of a compassionate God."

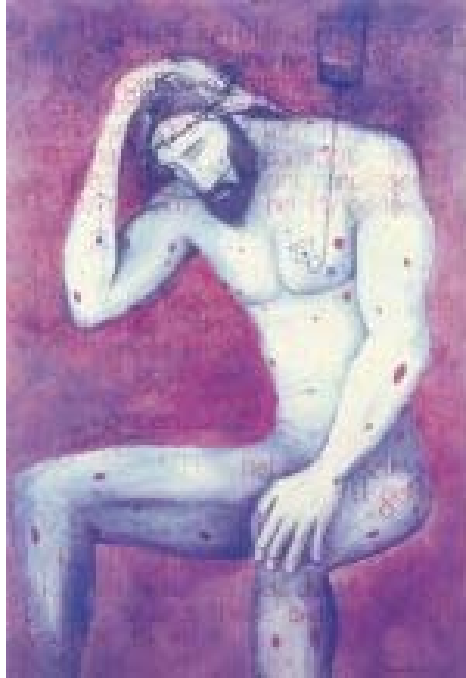
This broken cross represents the brokenness and woundedness of the world that we are living in. It shows the disconnectedness that we are experiencing in our lives. The artist refers to the fact that he had to "shatter the rocks" in order to see what they are really made of. We experience this "*shattering*" effect on a daily basis in our lives as we wrestle with lamentable issues, and it is only during the process of lament that we truly understand the impact that our situation has on our lives. When my six year old son saw this picture his first words were "Mommy, why is it so untidy?" I tried to explain, as best as I could to a six year

old. It made me realise that experiencing pain and suffering will never be a “tidy” affair. The broken rocks, the barbed wire, the spaces between each object all point to the disorder that is experienced by a broken people. It is only through our honesty with God that we can find true healing. The artist also refers to the history of South Africa that caused so many traumas in the lives of people. Even today, now that we are living in a democratic country, we still have “*barbed wire*” holding us hostage in our daily interaction with each other. We are still on the road of reconciliation and for some it will take longer than for others. Some may never even experience the reconciliation and peace that they long for.

Another painting that portrays brokenness is that of W Maxwell Lawton, namely *Man of Sorrows: Christ with Aids*. The painting was commissioned by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to mark his new AIDS ministry⁷⁰ in South Africa. It was first exhibited in the St George’s Anglican Cathedral in Cape Town in 1994 and since then has been taken throughout South Africa and seen by approximately 4 million people.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Wola Nani, an NGO, helps people living with HIV and AIDS to help themselves - <http://www.wolanani.co.za/> (Accessed 16 May 2014).

⁷¹ See <http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal-life/ASmax.html> (Accessed 19 May 2014).



*Man of Sorrows: Christ with Aids*⁷²

Lawton, an American artist and Aids sufferer, portrayed Christ with the purple lesions that are usually found on the bodies of Aids sufferers and are symptoms of the medical treatment that they went through. The painting was inspired by a vision he had while in hospital here in South Africa, in which he was sitting on a hospital bed, naked and hooked up to oxygen and intravenous drips. His image then changed into Christ who was sitting with his head in his hands, cancer lesions all over his body while wearing only a crown of thorns. He admitted that his personal experience as an Aids sufferer greatly impacted on his work.

Even though this painting created its fair share of controversy, Archbishop Tutu made it clear that it also challenges us to look anew at our faith and how we perceive God's grace and love. He reiterated that everyone is included in God's love, also Aids sufferers⁷³, and therefore no one should be excluded from the faith community or the society at large. Despite these words, people found it difficult to relate this image with the New Testament

⁷² See <http://www.thebody.com/content/art38646.html> (Accessed 16 May 2014).

⁷³ See Cilliers. J. 2012. *Dancing with Deity: Re-imagining the beauty of worship*. 2012, 169-170

image of Jesus Christ “*who was made sin for us (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21)*”,⁷⁴ and found the depiction blasphemous.⁷⁵

3.8. Lament in our URCSA hymn book (Nuwe Sionsgesange)

Music forms an integral part of our whole liturgical experience. It can be used in a very powerful manner to convey a message. It is important however that the music used in the liturgy actually reflects its underpinning theology. History has taught us that the singing of hymns and choruses in a congregation can cause havoc. The younger generation is more inclined towards having a praise and worship team as part of the liturgy while the older generation feels more at home in a church that still sings from the hymn book.

Kloppers⁷⁶ reminds us that “*church music is music with a specific function and therefore its value is determined in terms of the function the music must fulfil in the liturgy*”.⁷⁷ People have certain views about the function of music in the liturgy and this normally follows the cultural views and denomination. This view is also influenced by “*a person’s view of scripture, confessional foundation, view of the church and view of the worship service*”.⁷⁸ Unfortunately this potpourri of views often incites strong disagreement. In our church, in general, the older generation prefers to sing hymns during worship services. The younger people are more inclined to follow the lead of a praise and worship team. This demands a fine balance to keep both parties happy and also not to lose focus of the bigger picture of the liturgy.

We must be clear in our minds about what the worship service is about. Kloppers reiterates that a worship service is not about individuals but the assembly of a faith community coming

⁷⁴ Ibid., 170

⁷⁵ This painting targets specifically those who are suffering from the effects of AIDS. However, in a country ravaged by violence, this painting also portrays the brokenness of people and their struggle in coming to terms with what has happened to them. People who are rape survivors, and survivors of abuse in general, carry the visible scars of the abuse on their bodies – just as this painting portrays the lesions of the AIDS sufferer. One example of such a survivor is Alison Botha, who was abducted by two men outside her Port Elizabeth home in December 1994. She was raped, stabbed, disembowled and finally her throat was slit 16 times. Miraculously she survived this horrific incident and today she is a renowned international motivational speaker. She has found inner strength to triumph over this trauma in her life although she will carry the physical scars on her body for the rest of her life – just as the painting of Lawton illustrates.

⁷⁶ See Kloppers, E. 1997. Liturgical music: Worship or war? in *HTS Theological Studies* 53/1&2. 1997, 172-184

⁷⁷ Ibid., 177

⁷⁸ Ibid., 177

to worship and to express their faith. Because the focus is about our faith in the triune God the liturgical music should function as a golden thread that keeps all the elements of the liturgy together.

It is not strange to hear discussion in church about how the liturgy as well as liturgical music might be renewed. Words like “boring” and “for old people” are often terms used to describe the worship service. This is in stark contrast to those who find comfort in the familiarity of the liturgy. In most cases, people are of the opinion that we should move with the times. For Cilliers, “*an aesthetical approach to liturgy*” is needed “*if we want to promote liturgical renewal in a responsible manner*”.⁷⁹ He explains his understanding as follows:

Worship is about the search for meaning, the experience of (God’s) beauty, and the imaginative interpretation and expression of it. As such worship is about observation, imaginative interpretation and anticipation, and reconstruction.⁸⁰

These moments of worship can actually not be separated. Even though Cilliers illustrates them chronologically, he explains that this is not necessarily the sequence of events. The reader might experience a grouping together of movements. Cilliers takes his explanation a step further by using the movements in our Reformed service as an example, namely:

- We approach God,
- God approaches us through the Word and sacrament, and
- We approach the world.⁸¹

In order to approach God we need a vision of God, and to acknowledge that we are in God’s presence, which is not be possible without observation. Throughout the worship service we constantly interpret the presence of God as well as our encounter with God via reading of the Word, the preaching thereof as well as the interpretation. This is the art of interpretation and we believe that it coincides with what God intends for us; through interpretation we get

⁷⁹ See Cilliers, J. 2012. *Dancing with Deity: Re-imagining the beauty of worship*. 2012, 67

⁸⁰ Ibid., 67

⁸¹ Ibid., 141-142

a taste of what is yet to come. Through the Eucharist and Baptism we learn the skill of anticipation, and after being transformed through the sacraments we are sent out into the world to be agents of change in the transformation process of society.

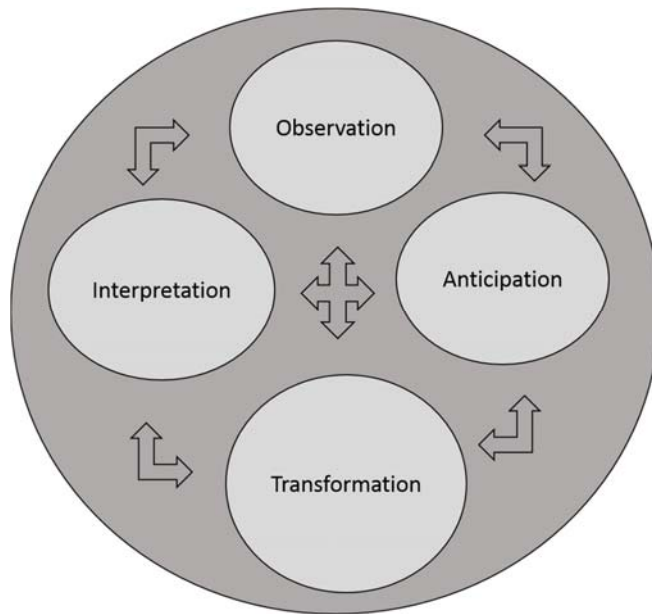


Figure 4. Source Cilliers 2012:141

By singing liturgical music we are in conversation with God. We hear and sing the promises that we read about in the Word, and respond to God's Word through songs of praise, through confession, through lament, etc. For this we need a variety of liturgical songs that address all these functions. Kloppers says there must be *"enough hymns to praise God's glory, but there must also be enough hymns that express a defective believer's struggle with God and with himself as a sinner"*.⁸² If we are inclined to sing only praise hymns it does reflect truthfully how we experience our faith. As we enter various stages of our lives our state of mind changes, and our hymns should reflect this. This idea was touched upon in chapter 1 when the researcher referred to congregants who are "forced" to sing praise and worship hymns upon entering the church even though they might be in a state of lament.

⁸² See Kloppers, *Liturgical music: Worship or war?* 1997, 179

The question that we now need to ask is “*Do we have a variety of hymns in our church’s hymn book to address the issue of lament?*” Would we be able to make use of our hymn book if we were to make changes to our liturgy in order to include lament in the liturgy?

Hymn 48 focuses completely on pain and suffering. Most of the hymns that referred to suffering (from hymn 1 to hymn 47), did so against the backdrop of sin, but hymn 48 illuminates the battle that children of God sometimes experience in their lives. It reiterates that regardless of our circumstances we should not lose hope; we should keep our trust in our Lord because God is watching over us. It refers to the Son of God who is “the Man of Sorrow” and therefore we can conclude that there will be an understanding of any trauma that we experience. The word “lament” is not used *per se* but the pain and suffering of people are pointed out very clearly.

Hymn 48⁸³

1 Moet jy stry teen moeilikhede,	[do you have to battle with difficulties]
kind van God, vertrou op Hom;	[child of God, trust in Him]
Hy gee krag op jou gebede;	[He gives you strength when you pray]
Hy ken jou omstandighede.	[He knows your circumstances]
Hy omskep die smart in vreug;	[He transforms the sorrow into joy]
ons kan ons in Hom verheug.	[we can rejoice in Him]
2 Bou in kommervolle dae	[In times of distress]
al jou hoop op Hom alleen;	[build your trust in Him alone]
Hy hoor al jou sugt’ en klae.	[He hears your sighs and complaints]
Hy ken al ons angs en vrae	[He knows all our anxieties and questions]
deur die swaarste teenspoed heen –	[throughout misfortunes]
Hy kan help, ja Hy alleen.	[He can help, yes He alone]
3 Hy sal geen belofte breek nie;	[He will not break any promise]

⁸³ This hymn is in the “*Nuwe Sionsgesange*”. The English translation in brackets was done by the researcher.

ja en amen is sy Woord.	<i>[his Word is "yes" and "amen"]</i>
Hy laat ons nie in die steek nie;	<i>[He will not let us down]</i>
laat ons onverhoord nie smeek nie,	<i>[will not let us plead without hearing]</i>
daarom leef ons vreesloos voort –	<i>[thus we can continue living without fear]</i>
Hy, die troue, hou sy Woord.	<i>[He, the faithful one, keeps His Word]</i>

4 Weg dan alle vrees en smarte:	<i>[Gone then all fear and sorrow]</i>
Hy, ons Vader, is ons God,	<i>[He, our Father, is our God]</i>
en sy Gees spreek in ons harte	<i>[and His Spirit speaks in our hearts]</i>
van die Seun – die Man van smarte.	<i>[about the Son – the Man of Sorrow]</i>
Hy, ons voorspraak by ons God,	<i>[He is our mediator]</i>
Hy waak oor ons lewenslot.	<i>[He watches over our lives]</i>

Verse 1 reminds us to trust in God despite the struggles that we experience. It promises that God strengthens us through our prayers and that our circumstances are not unknown. God is the one who can transform our lives.

In verse 2 we receive the promise that God hears our sighs and our complaints. God knows the anxieties that we experience and the questions that arise from these anxieties are also known to God. There is a promise that throughout all our misfortunes God can help us and only God alone.

Verse 3 promises that God will keep all the promises made to God's children. And it is against this background that we can live without fear.

In verse 4 all fear and sorrow are cast away because of God our Father. We are reminded that God is the protector of our lives.

It is noticeable that the section in the hymn book, hymns 66 to hymn 99, dealing with the birth of Jesus Christ, are joyful. These are carols which are sung mostly when we celebrate the birth of Christ during the Christmas season. However, this is a period known to

highlight the loneliness, pain and sorrow of many people. Many people mourn the death of a loved one during this season but the liturgical songs do not make provision for their lament. It is true that people mourn the death of loved ones throughout the year but this time of celebration forms a stark contrast with the memory of the loss that occurred. In our church, more emphasis is given to incorporate this loss at the midnight service on the 31st December. During this service, the names of all the congregants who passed away during the year are called out and a moment of silence is observed.

Hymns 94 to 124 deal with the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, focusing also on the fact that he died for our sins, and that salvation was brought about by this selfless act. Some of the hymns also refer to the hope and freedom that can be enjoyed as a result of the cross⁸⁴.

As can be expected, the hymns that deal with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are also full of joy, thanksgiving and praise. By contrast hymns 133 to 148 refer to the second coming of Christ, with the notion of yearning for the “not yet” clearly apparent.

Hymns 149 to 171 contain praise and reference to Jesus’ acts of salvation as well as the kingship of Christ. It also encourages us with the reminder that God will never desert us in our distress and anxieties because of the deep love that God has for God’s children. Hymn 159 glorifies the name of Jesus.

1 Daar klink ‘n wonderskone Naam	[<i>There sounds a beautiful Name</i>]
op aarde wyd en syd.	[<i>across the whole wide earth</i>]
Sy klank is onbeskryflik mooi,	[<i>The sound is undescribably beautiful</i>]
sy inhoud saligheid.	[<i>and its content is salvation</i>]

2 Die Naam praat van Gods liefdesplan:	[<i>This Name talks of God’s plan of love</i>]
genade wat bevry,	[<i>grace that sets free</i>]
en van sy Seun se offerbloed	[<i>and about His Son’s sacrificial blood</i>]

⁸⁴ See hymn 106

gestort vir jou en my. [that was spilt for you and me]

3 Die Naam vertel van Iemand wat [The Name tells of Someone who]
 my nood en leed verstaan [understands my needs and sorrows]
 wat ware mens is net soos ek, [it is a person like you and me]
 maar ook as God bestaan. [who also exists as God]

4 Die Naam is vol van Godlik krag: [This Name is full of divine power]
 die duiwels vlug daarvoor! [it makes the devils flee]
 En selfs die swakste klein gebed [even the weakest little prayer]
 wil God daardeur verhoor! [God wants to answer!]

5 Die Naam gee rus aan my gemoed [This Name gives rest to my emotions]
 en troos my in my smart. [and comforts me in my grief]
 Dit gee my telkens nuwe moed, [It give me hope time and again,]
 versterk en steun my hart. [it strengthens and supports my heart]

6 Ja, dit is Jesus, dis die Naam, [Yes, this is Jesus, this is the Name]
 die mooiste Naam vir my! [the most beautiful Name for me!]
 Hy is my Heiland, Heer en God, [This is my Saviour, Lord and God,]
 aan Hom is ek gewy! [to Him I am devoted!]⁸⁵

Under the rubric *Knowledge and Sin*, Hymn 220 mentions people's hardships in verse 3 and reiterates that God is aware of our suffering and our fears.

3 Hy hoor verby die praat van mense [He listens deeper than what people
 think]⁸⁶
 Hy sien, deur alle skyn, hul nood [He sees throughout their pretense, their needs]
 Hy reik oor vrees, besware, grense, [He reaches over fears, complaints,

⁸⁵ This hymn is in the “*Nuwe Sionsgesange*”. The free English translation in brackets was done by the researcher.

⁸⁶ Free English translation in brackets was done by the researcher.

barriers,]

en gee weer insig, uitsig, hoop!

[and again gives insight, prospects, hope!]

There does not seem to be hymns that focus on individual and communal laments or specify our daily challenges. The majority of hymns seem to be praise and worship hymns. In most cases where hardships are addressed, it is limited to one verse and usually suggests that these are the result of sinful behaviour. This does not leave much room for all the lamentable issues that we are faced with in our country and in the world at large. Admittedly our sinful nature does indeed also make us lament before God, but this is not the only time that we have a need to lament.

The hymns from 287 to 321 do contain consolation and trust, saying that we find rest and comfort only in the Lord our God. We are consoled by the promises in the Word and regardless of what we suffer, the Lord is there to help us, protect us and to guide us. An example is hymn 197, which talks about the storms in life but reminds us immediately that we should count our blessings, despite our circumstances.

Hymn 297⁸⁷

1 As die lewenstorms woedend om jou slaan

*[When you are ravaged by the
storms of life]*

En jy, gans ontmoedig, vrees dat jy vergaan

*[and discouraged, you are scared
that you will die]*

tel jou seëninge, noem hul een vir een

[count your blessings, one by one]

en jy sal Gods goedheid prys soos

*[and you will glorify God as never
before]*

nooit voorheen!

Koor [Chorus]:

Tel jou seëninge een vir een,

[count your blessings one by one]

seëninge jou deur God verleen!

[blessings bestowed on you by God]

Tel hul almal, noem hul een vir een,

[count them all, one by one]

⁸⁷ This hymn is in the “*Nuwe Sionsgesange*”. The English translation in brackets was done by the researcher.

en jy sal Gods goedheid prys soos
nooit voorheen!

[and you will glorify God as never
before]

2 As jy soms gebuk gaan onder sorg of smart,
as jou kruis te swaar voel vir jou moeë hart,
tel jou seëninge, dan sal flouheid vlug

[When you are experiencing challenges]
[when your cross is too heavy to carry]
[count your blessings, then weakness
will flee]

en jy sal nie langer treurig sit en sug

[and you will not be depressed
anymore]

3 Laat jou hart nie smag na mag en goed en eer -

[let your heart not covet power and
honour]

God gee op sy tyd jou nog oneindig meer!

[God will give you so much more]

Tel jou seëninge wat geen geld kan koop,

[count your blessings, which money
can't buy]

hou vas aan die Here, Hy is self jou Hoop!

[hold on to God, He is your hope!]

4 Watter lot of teenspoed op jou pad mag kom,

[Whichever challenges you may
face]

bly steeds vol vertroue, hou jou oog op Hom!

[keep on hoping, keep your eyes on
Him]

Tel jou seëninge! Bly die Here dien

[count your blessings! Keep on serving
the Lord]

totdat jy met blydschap ook die Godstad sien!

[until you will see the Kingdom, with
joy in your heart]

The chorus reminds us that we need to count our blessings, one by one, to remember the goodness of God and be encouraged to praise God. Verse 2 reminds us that even when our burdens become too heavy to carry, we only need count our blessings to improve our emotions. The message of hope, despite our circumstances, is outlined in verse 4. We are encouraged to keep on counting our blessings and serving God until we see God one day.

I am not advocating that people should not sing a joyful song to the Lord. However, most of our hymns seem to demand that we must be joyful regardless of our emotional state, as if we are not allowed to lament. I am pleading for more hymns that would allow people to verbalise their pain and suffering without being forced to be joyful in the same hymn.

3.9. Conclusion

Chapter 3 has provided different genres in which we may find lament. These different genres might even suggest that it would seem as if organisations *outside* the church are more appropriate and consistent in their lamenting of the injustices in our society. It is true that biblical lament is not the only example we have of lament. However, biblical lament offers us the opportunity and it provides us with ample examples on how we could possibly structure our liturgical prayer during communal lament. It can justify the harsh words that might be uttered to God because of the extreme emotions that are experienced. Our justification lies in the fact that we are following the examples of our religious ancestors. Taking our cue from these “*biblically-shaped liturgical laments*” shows that God cares about our suffering.⁸⁸ I agree with Witvliet when he mentions that “*many psalms clearly arise out of immediate experience and reflect unrestrained expression of guilt, fear or anger. Yet they teach us the value of form*”.⁸⁹ Therefore these laments provide us with structure and guidance on a practical level, in our circumstances. This structure and guidance might be the only “normality” that we are experiencing through the whirlwind of emotions that we are trying to process, and function as the only thing that makes sense to us at that point in our lives.

When we have experienced this structured lament, we can sing praises unto God with integrity because we have bared our soul before our Lord and Saviour and we are hopeful for a change in our situation. Hopeful, because during difficult times in our lives we hold on to what we were taught, and what we have experienced – that God is faithful. We might find it difficult to experience the presence of God in our turmoil, but it is in times like these that we

⁸⁸ See Witvliet, J. 1997. “A time to weep: Liturgical lament in times of crisis”, 5

<http://reformedworship.org/article/june-1997/time-weep-liturgical-lament-times-crisis> (accessed 05 November 2013)

⁸⁹ Ibid., 5

rely on the testimony of our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as our spiritual ancestors. Hamman reiterates that:

with God present in our losses, mourning becomes a creative force that not only heals, restores, and revitalizes, but also anticipates a new future. When grieving does not occur, however, the opposite is true. Then grief becomes a literal black hole devouring the spiritual and relational energy within the Gospel community. Grieving can bring hope as grief can bring despair.⁹⁰

Singing our songs of praise, after we have lamented before the throne, takes on new meaning. It allows us to bare our soul before God, telling Him of our pain, sorrow and disappointment, before we actually go into the mode of praise. This changes the sequence of having to praise and worship immediately upon entering the church, regardless of our emotional well-being. When we lament in our faith communities, our lonely voices are heard. Witvliet explains that because of the personal nature of lament, it might not be possible for the faith community really to understand the loneliness of the individual. However, the process of being part of a faith community, lamenting together – before God – may give a sense of solidarity with all those who have prayed these prayers of lament, throughout the centuries.

The words which are used during these prayers or even songs of lament, create a world of their own. In his article “*Sounding salvation: theological perspectives on music as articulation of life*”⁹¹, Cilliers refers to these worlds as “*spaces of comfort and grace but also chaos and darkness*”.⁹² The articulation of feelings, through the prayers, poems and songs of lament, express the pain and hurt experienced by individuals and communities in our world today. These words try to find sense amidst the chaos and darkness that is experienced; words of lament creating the

⁹⁰ See Hamman, J.C. 2005. *When Steeples Cry: Leading congregations through loss and change*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 2005, 28

⁹¹ See Cilliers, J. 2013. *Sounding Salvation: Theological Perspective on music as articulation of life*, 2013, 1-15. (Unpublished) This paper was read at the *Music and Well-Being International Conference* from 06-10 August 2013 at the School of Music, North-West University at the Potchefstroom Campus. Cilliers’s article considers the phenomenon of sound, namely music, and how it could possibly be linked between sound and life, sound and silence as well as sound and salvation. .

⁹² Ibid., 1

spaces of comfort and grace that we long for. This longing is not just for us but for our communities and for the world at large. This process of communal lament engrains the biblical texts into our minds and spiritual beings, and provides us with markers with which we can “*anchor personal prayer and worship*”.⁹³

The process of looking at lament in different genres inevitable brings questions to mind. This research ponders the issue of lament in liturgy from the context of URCSA, so the question should really be “What did we do as a church?” and “Why do we as a church not lament anymore about these issues?” One would imagine that our church, with its history firmly grounded in the apartheid era, would be at the forefront when it comes to lamenting about social injustice, but that is not the case. Our liturgy has in fact become poorer due to the exclusion of practical elements of lament in our worship services. Why is this happening in our church?

A possible answer is given by Westermann when he explains the understanding of lament against the background of the confession of guilt.⁹⁴ He explains that when lamenting before God, people don’t usually, or necessarily, confess their sins as well. The issue that is lamented is at the forefront of the conversation with God. This contrasts starkly with the Pauline teachings which state “*sinfulness is a part of man’s condition and ... the confession of sin is therefore a part of every approach to God*”.⁹⁵ Prior to lamenting a confession of sin must take place. However, since lament is not an integral part of our worship anymore it is as if, to a certain degree, “*the confession of sin has become the Christianized form of lament*”.⁹⁶ Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we can receive salvation as well as everlasting life. But Jesus’ death did not imply an end to suffering. In fact, Jesus warned His followers that they should not be surprised when they suffered because of their faith. He made it clear that we will experience much heartache in the last days.

⁹³ See Witvliet, J. 1997. “A time to weep: Liturgical lament in times of crisis”, 6
<http://reformedworship.org/article/june-1997/time-weep-liturgical-lament-times-crisis> (accessed 05 November 2013).

⁹⁴ See Westermann, C. 1974. The role of lament in the theology of the Old Testament. *Interpretation* (28): 1974, 32-34

⁹⁵ Ibid., 33

⁹⁶ Ibid., 33

For Westermann, this is the real reason why we do not find lament in the Christian prayer anymore. Guilt of sin seems to have priority over suffering. As Christians we are taught to carry our cross and follow Jesus. We must bear our suffering patiently because it will come to an end. It would therefore seem that even though Jesus suffered on the cross and cared for the marginalised and those who were suffering, the *“crucified Lord in contrast was concerned with sin and not at all with suffering”*.⁹⁷ If this is the case it would make us question Paul and Pauline oriented theology. We would need to ask then whether Paul had understood the work of Jesus in a one-sided manner. Westermann makes it very clear that nowhere in the Gospels do we find suggestions or evidence that Jesus wanted those who suffer to bear their *“suffering patiently”*.⁹⁸ He admits that there are instances where a combination of forgiveness of sins with healing is taught but nowhere does Jesus place *“forgiveness of sins in the place of healing”*.⁹⁹

Westermann also referred to Psalm 22 in which the authors indicated that Jesus took up the lament and suffering of His people. This suffering was endured to the very end. This was why Jesus came to earth, and He was obedient to God to the grave. Jesus did not have just sinners in mind while on the cross, but He was also thinking of those who were suffering. This was the example that we found during Jesus’s ministry on earth – a God who shows compassion to the marginalised, the downtrodden, the poor and those who are suffering; a God who meets people at the point of their need and a God who does not disappoint.

Chapter 3 made it clear that lament cannot be placed in a “Christianity” box. It showed that lament, when the need arises, could be embodied with the help of different genres.

The next chapter will continue to investigate the normative task of Osmer by theologically reflecting on lament in the Old and New Testament. This will allow us to get a glimpse into how the people of God integrated lament in their lives.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 33

⁹⁸ Ibid., 33

⁹⁹ Ibid., 34

Chapter 4

Biblical Grounding/Terms

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 still forms part of the normative task, as was indicated in chapter 1. The core function of the normative task is to grapple with the question “what is going on?” The aim of chapter 4 is therefore to look at examples of lament, specifically in the Old Testament and the New Testament and to see how this could assist in our quest for the re-discovery and the re-claiming of lament in liturgy.

In the hypothesis of this research a proposition is made that in order for the church to be relevant in the lives of her members, the process of lament in liturgy would need to be re-evaluated. It is also anticipated that the re-evaluation, and ultimately re-introduction of lament in liturgy could trigger the healing of our faith community. People need to understand that our daily walk with God constitute of praise and lament. Patrick Miller, Professor of Old Testament Theology, is of the opinion that even though we mostly think of lament in relation to the Psalms, Job and Lamentations,

theologically the cry to God and the response of God are a fundamental theme of the whole of Scripture. The human cry to God for help is not one element in the biblical story; it is one of its *foundation stones*, foundational for both our anthropology and our theology. The lament, therefore, is not exceptional. It is the rule. It is at one and the same time the voice of pain and the voice of prayer. It is the voice of pain, the possibility of language when suffering is so great that it is hard even to speak.¹

¹ See Miller, P. 2005. Heaven’s Prisoners: The Lament as Christian Prayer. In: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square. (eds.), S.A. Brown and P.D. Miller. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox. 2005, 16

Examples of this pain and inability – at times – to speak are found in Scripture. Miller continues to say that we need to recover the “*practice of lament as our universal human prayer*”.² Inevitably, we need to “*learn how to protest and trust at the same time*”.³ And in order to do this we need to:

learn to pray as if there is no God around anywhere who can or will do anything about our situation – except possibly to make it worse – and it is to pray as if God is always listening and can be trusted to help.⁴

The tension within these two prayers really asks for the rediscovery of one’s faith in God as well.

This chapter consists of three sections, namely:

- Lament in the Bible (introductory remarks)
- Lament in the Old Testament
- Lament in the New Testament

Lament in the Bible provides theological reflections in general as well as engagement with the thoughts of scholars in particular. The sections on lament in the Old Testament and lament in the New Testament provide exegesis on selected scripture portions.

4.2. Lament in the Bible

A term used in the Old Testament for lament in Hebrew is the normative *qînâ* with its derived verb being *qônēn*. According to the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis (Volume 4), *qônēn* is “*related to contexts of death and disaster and accompanied by a range of various terms for grief and mourning*”.⁵ The words of lament concern the departed or bystanders and it looks back to the past. However, for the modern scholar, lament seems to be a prayer that is addressed to God that looks in part to the future. It is important to note that the *qînâ* also took the poetic form. An example occurs when Adam expresses his joy over Eve

² Ibid., 17

³ Ibid., 19

⁴ Ibid., 20

⁵ Van Gemenen, W.A. (ed.), 1997. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis Volume 4*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 1997, 866

in Gen 2:23, and 2 Sam 3:31-35, after the murder of Abner, where it is in the context of a mourning ritual.

One of the most common words of mourning is *'bl* and its meaning is wider than that of weeping (*bkh*).⁶ The verb is *ābal*, the adjective *ābēl* and the nominative *ēbel*. The *qal*-format of the verb is often used metaphorically. Examples of *'bl* are Gen 37:34-35 (Jacob's reaction to the "death" of Joseph), Deut 34:8 (Israelites mourning over the death of Moses), 2 Sam 11:27 (Bathsheba mourning over her husband), Gen 50:3 (Egypt mourning over Jacob), 10-11 (continued mourning over the death of Jacob).

Bkh is another term used to indicate weeping or crying, although not all crying is associated with mourning. Examples are Samson's wife who manipulated him with her tears (Judg 14:16-17) and Hannah who wept because Peninnah was taunting her over her barrenness (1 Sam 1:7-8).

Spd (verb) is another term denoting mourning, although it appears rather to indicate wailing. The nominative is *mispēd*. Examples of *spd* can be found in Jeremiah 34:5 (warning to Zedekiah), Jeremiah 22:18 (the Lord's words about Jehoiakim, son of Josiah king of Judah) and 2 Sam 1:11-12 (David and others mourn the death of Saul). With the use of *spd* no indication of content is given.

Variations existed within Israel regarding the actual ritual of mourning. Walter Moberly, a lecturer in Theology at the University of Durham (United Kingdom) mentions practices used in some contexts, such as "going barefoot (2 Sam 15:30; Ezek 24:17)), tearing one's clothes (2 Sam 3:31; Job 1:20), or putting on sackcloth (2 Sam 3:31; Ezek 27:31)".⁷ Even though the practices of mourning in the Old Testament are not explained, it becomes evident that these practices were part of an important ritual in the person's life through which they could express their grief in an individual as well as a communal manner.

⁶ Ibid., 869

⁷ Moberly wrote on the issue of lament in Van Gemenen, W.A. (ed.), 1997. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis Volume 4*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. 1997:872

Section 3.3 referred to the different groups that Brueggemann⁸ allocated to the Psalms⁹, namely Psalms of *orientation*, *disorientation* and *reorientation*. Examples of Psalms of orientation are Psalm 1, 8 and 119. Psalms of disorientation include Psalms 13, 22, 88 and 137 whereas the Psalms of reorientation include Psalm 30 and 138.

It is important to note that not all prayers can be categorized as laments. Some prayers praise God while others may be meditative. By contrast a prayer of lament expresses suffering or a need for something as well as a plea to God for help. We can deduce its function from the form of a psalm. So in the case of a lament psalm it assumes the form of addressing God in a specific manner, stating the problem, moving towards an appeal and in most cases confirming that despite the circumstances, the poet's trust is in the Lord. The form of the lament psalm therefore provides the structure in which movement takes place and in the sharing of deep-seated feelings of sorrow and pain.

Determining the historical settings of psalms is not easy and in most cases there is little information available. We are also cautioned not to use the headings of psalms as the only measure of determining the historical context.¹⁰ Bratcher states:

the historical or cultural setting of a psalm itself can be significant, particularly if the setting is related to the particular form, or if specific historical elements are clearly present within the psalm itself.¹¹

He continues to explain that to understand the perspectives and theology of a psalm it would be helpful to know why and in which context it was written. For example, Psalm 137 has its roots in the Babylonian exile whereas Psalm 2 was part of the crowning of a new king in Israel.

⁸ See Brueggemann, W. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. 1984, 51-88

⁹ Biblical texts referenced in this section are from *The Holy Bible New International Version*, 1978 – unless stated otherwise.

¹⁰ See Bratcher, D. 2011. Patterns for life: structure, genre and theology in Psalms. *The Voice: Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing Christians*. See: <http://www.crvoice.org/pdf/psalmgenre.pdf>. [Accessed on 05 November 2013], 2

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2

As can be seen from the examples mentioned above, lament and mourning occur not only in the Psalms. Rediscovering and re-introducing the process of lament is in line with the command given by God to the women that we read about in Jeremiah 9:17-20.

¹⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says:

“Consider now! Call for the wailing women to come;
send for the most skillful of them.

¹⁸ Let them come quickly
and wail over us
till our eyes overflow with tears
and water streams from our eyelids.

¹⁹ The sound of wailing is heard from Zion:

‘How ruined we are!
How great is our shame!
We must leave our land
because our houses are in ruins.’”

²⁰ Now, you women, hear the word of the LORD;

open your ears to the words of his mouth.
Teach your daughters how to wail;
teach one another a lament.

Throughout her writings Juliana Claassens, an Associate Professor of Old Testament at Stellenbosch University, has tried to make the reader understand the different images assigned to God in the Bible. However, her examples are not taken only from the Bible. In her book, *Mourner Mother Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament*, as the title indicates, she considers God as mourner, mother and midwife. For Claassens these women, all skilled in mourning according to Jeremiah, are not a focus point in this narrative¹². Rather the focus is on the judgment and destruction experienced during the exile. But she

¹² See Claassens, L.J.M. 2012. *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 2012, 20

insists that these “barely audible voices play an important role in reshaping our understanding of the Deliverer God”.¹³

I would go further and claim that these wailing women could be a perfect example of how lament could be incorporated in our liturgies. Just as these women needed to acquire skills to keen we also have to acquire, once again, the skill to lament. I agree with Claassens when she alluded to the fact that “the wailing women vocalised what the people needed to express”.¹⁴ That trend of thought recurs in chapter 1 regarding the vocalisation of lament. And just as these women and daughters are called upon to learn a dirge and a lament, so we, as church, should be available and willing to learn the art of lamenting.

Claassens also explores the therapeutic role of these wailing women.¹⁵ By assisting the people to find words for the horrific acts that happened in their communities, they are in fact initiating a process of healing and hope.¹⁶ Furthermore, these women have a prophetic role in their communities as well.¹⁷ They are protesting, in a specific manner, against the injustices that the community is experiencing. They are not just instructed by God to sing a dirge but they are also summoned to teach the daughters these dirges and they in turn must teach their neighbours. The continuous cycle of teaching shows clearly that the community becomes involved in the social issues. Claassens paints a powerful metaphor when she points out that God becomes “a Wailing or Mourning Woman”.¹⁸ She explains that God is actually the One who initiates the mourning in Jeremiah 9. God weeps and this action can be seen as a catalyst for the wailing women to start their mourning. By mourning with the people we are introduced to God’s love and compassion for the people.

¹³ Ibid., 20

¹⁴ Ibid., 27

¹⁵ Ibid., 29

¹⁶ In chapter 1 of “*Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*”, 3-4, Anderson and Foley discussed the *Power of Storytelling*. They tell the story of the effects that the massacres that took place in Rwanda and Tanzania had on the women who lived in the refugee camps. These women were unable to sleep because of the traumatic events that they had witnessed, but were instructed by camp officials not to speak about the atrocities in the camp. Even though they obeyed this instruction, they were haunted by the images of what had happened. A psychologist who visited the camp decided to set up a “*story tree*” where these women could go and share their story. Within a few days many women visited this “*story tree*” to share the pain and hurt that they experienced, using it as a platform to vocalise their pain and suffering. The psychologist received word that the women in the refugee camp were finally able to sleep.

¹⁷ See Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife*: 2012, 30

¹⁸ Ibid., 31

Although the Old Testament shows clearly how God's people lamented through every stage of their history, appealing to the compassion of God, the examples of personal lament are also very prominent. In the Psalms, the cry of distress is normally heard from the individual, and the Psalter is not the only book in the Old Testament with explicit instances of lament. The book of Job also contains lament in the relationship between God and man. Westermann alludes to the fact that the Psalter and the book of lamentations contain only a limited number of the laments recorded in the Old Testament.¹⁹ He continues by pointing out the three stages in the history of lament:

- i) Short laments of the early period (e.g. Gen 25:22; 27:46; Judges 15:18; 21:2);
- ii) The rhythmically structured laments of the psalms;
- iii) The laments of the prose prayers of the later period (Ezra 9; Neh 9).

He states that lament is spread throughout the Old Testament. These laments are in place to "*appeal to God's compassion*" and form an integral part of the relationship between God and man.²⁰ Against this background it is almost unthinkable not to have lament present in our relationship with God.

Interestingly, Westermann poses the same question that this research is grappling with, namely how did it happen "*that in the Western Christendom the lament has been totally excluded from man's relationship with God, with the result that it has completely disappeared ... from prayer and worship*".²¹ This research is focusing on this issue only in the context of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa but the question remains the same. We also might not have a complete disappearance of lament because there are elements of lament present in prayers and in certain areas of worship, but these are negligible if compared to how Israel lamented before God.

¹⁹ See Westermann, C. 1974. The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament. *Interpretation* (28): 1974, 23

²⁰ Ibid., 24

²¹ Ibid., 25

4.3. Lament in the Old Testament

During the research, Psalm 13 was used as the Scripture reading in the three congregations that participated in the empirical studies. The sermon is attached as an addendum. I cite Psalm 13 as an example of a lament prayer.

¹How long, O Lord?

Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

³Look on me and answer, O Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;

⁴my enemy will say,

“I have overcome him,”

and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵**But** I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶I will sing to the Lord,

for he has been good to me. (Psalm 13:1-6)

This short Psalm indicates how an individual²² lament is structured. The poet asks simple questions about his suffering. His urgent appeals can also not be ignored. The first two verses set out the complaint while verses 3 and 4 articulate the petition, followed by the expression of trust and praise in verses 5 and 6. The phrase “How long ...?” occurs four times in verses 1-2 and the desperation and impatience of the poet comes through clearly. In verses 3-4 three petitions are uttered and God is also called upon to act.

²² See *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 19: Psalm 1-50*, 41; *The New Interpreter's Bible: A commentary in twelve volumes. Volume IV*, Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1996, 726

Petition 1: God should “*Look*”. This appeal in fact asks God to reverse His previous action of hiding His face (“*how long will you hide your face from me?*”). See verse 1.

Petition 2: God should “*answer*”. The poet asked a series of questions in verse 1-2 and therefore the request that God should “*answer*” is quite appropriate.

Petition 3: The poet asks God to give “*light*” i.e. give renewed strength, without which the psalmist will die.

The build-up from complaint to petition in the first four verses seems quite logical but the movement from petition to trust and praise in verse 5-6 is somewhat of a surprise. Mc Cann suggests that this change did not involve the “*psalmist situation or condition, but the psalmist*”.²³ There is ambiguity in the last few verses which “*invites the interpreter to view complaint and praise simultaneously rather than [as] separate moments*”.²⁴

The ambiguity that we find in Psalm 13 also gives an indication that in life we will almost always need to pray or ask “How long, O Lord?”. And with this complaint we will simultaneously confess that the Lord has been good. We articulate confidence in past experiences and hope for the future. Psalm 13 also reminds us that “*there is no following Jesus without bearing a cross (Mark 8:34)*”.²⁵ The language of lament used in this prayer shows that in prayer we can be brutally honest about our feelings. It challenges us to find the words to articulate our pain and suffering; to invite and welcome God into our darkest hour.

Not all laments have this kind of movement. An example of a lament that does not move to praise is Psalm 88 which has a completely different mood and contrasts by its tone of despair as well as the numerous complaints against God!

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to *mahalath leannoth*. A *maskil* of Heman the Ezrahite.

²³ Mc Cann, J.C. 1996. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A commentary in twelve volumes. Volume IV*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1996, 727

²⁴ Ibid., 727

²⁵ Ibid., 728

¹O Lord, the God who saves me,
day and night I cry before you.

²May my prayers come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.

³For my soul is full of trouble
and my life draws near the grave.

⁴I am counted among those
who go down to the pit;
I am like a man without strength.

⁵I am set apart with the dead,
like the slain who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.

⁶You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths.

⁷Your wrath lies heavily upon me;
you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.

⁸You have taken from me my closest friends
and have made me repulsive to them.

I am confined and cannot escape;

⁹my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, O Lord, every day;

I spread out my hands to you.

¹⁰Do you show your wonders to the dead?
Do those who are dead rise up and praise you?

¹¹Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction?

¹²Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,

Or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

¹³But I cry to you for help, O Lord;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.

¹⁴Why, O Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?

¹⁵From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death;
I have suffered your terrors and am in despair.

¹⁶Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.

¹⁷All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.

¹⁸You have taken my companions and loved ones from me;
the darkness is my closest friend. (Psalm 88:1-18²⁶)

Psalm 88 is a prayer of bitter complaint and lament. While verse 1 does refer to the Lord who saves, the rest of the Psalm levels complaints directly at Yahweh, who is held responsible for the psalmist's dire situation. Although Psalm 88 resorts among the category of individual laments it has distinct features underlining the severity of the complaint, which occupies virtually the whole psalm. Scholars and interpreters speculate that the psalmist might have been terminally ill.²⁷ There is also a lack of reference to enemies in this psalm. Yahweh seems to be the only one who is at fault. The psalmist also feels isolated from friends and family.

This psalm ends unhappily in “darkness”. The questions of the psalmist have not been answered. This is a perfect example of how Psalms can apply to all of life. It reminds us that life is not necessarily packed with perfect understanding of things that happen.

²⁶ See *The Holy Bible – New International Version*, 1978g

²⁷ See *Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 19: Psalms 1-50*. Waco, Texas: Word Books. 1983, 399 and *New Interpreters's Bible: A Commentary in twelve volumes, Volume IV*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1996, 1027

Brueggeman classifies Psalm 88 as a psalm of disorientation and this disorder is a “*proper subject for discourse with God*”.²⁸ This could be difficult when God is perceived as “being absent”. Regardless of this perception, all of life should be “*brought to speech, and everything brought to speech must be addressed to God, who is the final reference for all of life*”.²⁹

A faith community who uses these psalms of disorientation is in fact a community that is in touch with their realities, that understands that life sometimes passes through a process of darkness. Given the wave of violence that is gripping our country, I am of the opinion that Psalm 88 is quite suitable for our situation in South Africa; especially against the information that was provided in chapter 1 where the researcher alluded to incidents cited by Sozi as well as the experiences of women in their social and church environment. In chapter 3 examples were given of the brutal rape of Anene Booysen as well as the massacre at Marikana. These incidents caused a lot of pain and anger amongst the people of South Africa and therefore needs an intervention for them to voice their anger and pain so that the process of healing can be initiated. This research probes for a process of lament in liturgy that could act as a catalyst in situations like these.

4.4. Lament in the New Testament

Although we do not find as many examples of lament recorded in the New Testament as in the Old Testament, this does not mean that lament does not exist or is not important in the New Testament. We find examples where even Jesus lamented certain issues.

a. *Rachel is weeping (Matt. 2:16-18)*

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had

²⁸ See Brueggemann, W. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. 1984, 52

²⁹ Ibid., 52

learned from the Magi.¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.

The Christmas story as read in Matthew 2, could be seen as a one-sided portrayal of events. The birth of Christ is romanticized and yet, it has a dark side to it. The birth of a king is announced. Unfortunately this announcement created conflict with the existing kingship. The wise men, who had been following the star and wanted to worship the new-born king, enquired in Jerusalem about his presence. This caused consternation amongst the people in Jerusalem. Suffice to say, King Herod was disturbed about this news.

At Christmas times, we re-tell the story of the birth of Christ, remembering the wise men, the shepherds, the angels, the bright star that guided the wise men, the animals that were in the manger with the baby and his mother. These scenes are acted out by Sunday school children of local congregations. But in most cases we forget about the massacred innocents; the babies and toddlers who were slain during this period. Upon hearing the news of a king that had been born, King Herod instructed the wise men to search for the baby and then inform him where he might also go and worship him (according to Matthew 2:8). Through divine intervention the wise men did not make contact with King Herod again, which angered the King so that he ordered that all boys who were in Bethlehem and its vicinity and who were two years and younger, should be killed. This is what Susan Durber calls “*the forgotten Christmas story*”.³⁰ She is of the opinion that we need to be able to consider this story “*alongside our own stories, even our stories of suffering and terror, and know that God has spoken to us*”.³¹

The sermon of Susan Durber was used in a workshop and several participants – from different countries and different backgrounds - discussed the text and the sermon. The actions and

³⁰ See Mueller, C. & Graf, C. 2005. “Homiletics as Theological Discipline”. In Grözinger, A. and Ho Soon, K. (eds.), *Preaching as Shaping Experience in a World of Conflict. Studia Homiletica* 5: 2005, 63

³¹ Ibid., 63

possible consequences of the role players in this nativity story was looked at anew. These role players included the grieving mothers and fathers, the soldiers who had to carry out the order, King Herod – who gave the order, the wise men who refused to give King Herod any news on where the baby was, and God who seemed to have intervened only in the household of Joseph. One of the participants, Donald Heet from the USA, told the story from the perspective of a mother who lost two of her children in this massacre. He poignantly described what a mother could have gone through during this annihilation, how she would almost stand aloof because the pain was just too much to bear.

My voice will not be heard, only my weeping will find its way into history. From me there will be no act of devotion, only protest and pleading and pain. I live in the nameless realm where women live. I have no name and no voice, only tears...With the other women, I weep bitter tears and my heart is broken... Nathan was almost two and he was so funny... He had just learnt to say a prayer...He won't be saying any more prayers. And Joshua, just a tiny baby, only three weeks old... My body does not yet know that my sons are dead, though their blood is dry on my skin.³²

These are just a few thoughts that we could imagine went through this mother's heart. Thoughts, which until today, are pertinent in people's minds when they go through such traumatic events that they are unable to verbalise their pain and sorrow.

In Matt. 2:16-18 we find Rachel who is weeping for her children who are no more. She is weeping and does not want to be comforted. She makes her voice heard in a loud cry. Claassens points out that the tears of Rachel are introduced at a point in the narrative where Herod was killing all the two year olds.³³ Rachel's voice of resistance against this brutality of the empire is the only one that can be heard. This individual lament of Rachel turns into a

³² Ibid., 71

³³ See Claassens, L.J. 2009. "The image of the wailing woman and the task of the feminist theologian: with special attention to the role of lament in the book of Matthew". In Pillay, M. Nadar, S. and Le Bruyns, C. (eds.), *Ragbag Theologies: Essays in honour of Denise M Ackermann: A feminist theologian of praxis*. Stellenbosch: SUNPRESS. 2009, 196

collective lament where all mothers (and I would add fathers), throughout the ages, are still crying for sons and daughters who died in infancy.

These few sentences, in the midst of the nativity scene, tells the story of all mothers who were not even mentioned. It tells the story of all the mothers and fathers who cried for their children and prevents us from ever forgetting this terrible tragedy. It forces us to think about the meaning of Christmas, against this tragic background. Even today, we are still faced with the senseless deaths of innocent children and people. In South Africa, today, what can we say about the rapes of our babies and young children? In the face of all this evidence, we cannot have a religion that does not acknowledge the atrocities existing in our communities. We cannot be so heavenly-minded that we do not see what is happening right in front of us. We are called to acknowledge and name these injustices. We should gather people to lament with us, against every instance of injustice and unjust suffering in our society.

The above argument contrasts directly with the thoughts of Campbell³⁴, who considers how New Testament scholars use the Old Testament terminology. He looked critically at the labelling of New Testament texts and is of the opinion that English and German NT commentators mislabelled these texts as laments. The relevant texts include Matt 2:18, 23:37-39, Luke 13:34-35, 19:41-44 and 23:27-31.³⁵ He makes it clear that although by no means suggesting that the commentators are not aware of the lament genre, their omission is unintentional and they “*apparently used the term lament in its classical English usage and not according to form-critical categories*”.³⁶ Campbell provides a definition with the basic elements of lament, based on the contributions that were made by Gunkel and Westermann on the subject. The definition is as follow:

An OT lament is a distressful complaint/question/ appeal directed toward God (a prayer) in order to work change for a real or perceived problem.³⁷

³⁴ See Campbell, D. 2011. NT Scholar’s Use of OT Lament Terminology and its Theological and Interdisciplinary Implications. *Bulletin for Biblical Research* (21.2): 2011, 213-226

³⁵ Ibid, 213

³⁶ Ibid., 214

³⁷ Ibid., 217

He states categorically that these texts do not have the basic elements required for identification as a lament. For example, in Matt. 2:18 Rachel weeps for her children and does not want to be comforted. This is a quotation taken from Jer. 31:15. Matt 23:37-39 and Luke 13:34-35 depicts Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. In Luke 19:41-44 Jesus weeps because of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, and in Luke 23:27-31 Jesus asks the women who weep for him to weep rather for themselves.³⁸ Campbell agrees that all these texts have an element of interwoven sadness, but none contains the components of the Old Testament lament. The texts does not include a prayer, the sadness that is vocalised is not directed at God and there are also “no requests to change a given plight”.³⁹ He further points out that even though elements of sadness, grief, weeping and despair are present in a text it does not make the text a lament.

Campbell’s argument does make sense but I believe that Claassens and others, see specifically Matt. 2:18 as a cry of lament that does not focus only on Rachel but also on others who have experienced similar injustices in their lives. This text might not adhere to the formal structure of a lament, but it definitely acts as a catalyst for the start of a lament.

b. Jesus laments on the cross (Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46)

³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God,
 why have you forsaken me?”).

In Mark 15⁴⁰ we are confronted with exactly what Jesus foretold his disciples, namely His crucifixion. According to Evans the crucifixion of Jesus was “*the most fearful, painful, shameful form of execution*”.⁴¹ During the long and painful process, Jesus was betrayed by one of His own, He was condemned, disowned, tortured and he had to endure one mockery after another. He was ridiculed and asked sarcastically to save himself. And He goes through His execution alone as His disciples had abandoned Him during His arrest the previous night.

³⁸ Ibid., 219

³⁹ Ibid., 219

⁴⁰ Also see Matthew 27:32-56; Luke 23:26-49 and John 19:17-37

⁴¹ See Evans, C.A. 2001. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34B*: Mark 8:27-16:20. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 2001, 511

Jesus finds himself in a desperate situation. He is completely alone and feels abandoned by His own father, hence the cry *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*.⁴² In all the recorded prayers Jesus calls God “Father”. But now He refers to Him as *“my God”*. This shows the extent of the abandonment by His father; abandonment to death. Jesus cries out in desperation but the prayer is unheeded. God is silent. God is absent. Or so it seems. Chester explains this further by mentioning that this *“prayer comes from the lips of Jesus. This is God – God present in the godforsaken one”*.⁴³ We can only try to understand what He must have gone through but we will never truly grasp the full meaning of this godforsakenness. Jesus carried the burden of the sinfulness of the whole world and through that experienced complete abandonment by God the Father. Jesus even tried to get out of this situation when wrestling with the prospect of the crucifixion in Gethsemane. But throughout this whole ordeal Jesus submitted to the will of the Father.

Despite Jesus’ godforsaken state He still calls out to His father. The two-fold address *“My God, my God”* shows that despite everything, He still acknowledges God as His father. However, “father” would indicate an intimate term of endearment, a form which is avoided as Jesus refers to His father simply as “God”. And after all the abuse that He had undergone, He was still able to cry these words of lament out with a loud voice. Jesus was about to lose His life but it seems it was the reality of being forsaken by God that was too much to bear.

The Son of God dies completely alone, and the dark hour in the life of Jesus becomes His darkest hour yet. And nature echoes this darkness in His life. Before His agonising cry, darkness of the land was experienced from the sixth to the ninth hour, as if nature “lamented” with Him. Evans suggests that this darkness actually *“signifies judgment”* and one of the reasons why Jesus cries out *“suggests that divine judgment has in part fallen on him”*.⁴⁴ The theme of judgment can thus be observed in this section. Also, the darkness can be seen as an

⁴² This phrase is a quote from Psalm 22:1

⁴³ See Chester, T. 2003. *The Message of Prayer: Approaching the Throne of Grace*. Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press. 2003, 236

⁴⁴ See Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34B*: 2001, 507

apocalyptic image⁴⁵ as it indicates a great time of sorrow and mourning⁴⁶ and it is used as a common metaphor for judgment.⁴⁷ Judgment and eschatology⁴⁸ can therefore be drawn from this text.

Jesus dies an agonising death, completely alone. God seemed to have been silent. But in this silence God has actually become present and very accessible. When Jesus gave His last cry, the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Behind this curtain was the ultimate presence of God – the Holy of Holies. The tearing of this curtain⁴⁹ “revealed” the hidden God and made God accessible to all mankind. Before this moment, only the High Priest had access to God in the temple, behind the curtain, and then only once a year after the high priest had offered a sacrifice.⁵⁰ This entrance was required or “allowed” so that the priest could make atonement for the sins of the people. With the tearing of the curtain the sacrificial cult of the temple also came to an end.⁵¹ Jesus now became the ultimate sacrificial lamb, who died for the sin of all mankind.

Chester reiterates that Christ is revealed through the cross.⁵² The bystanders ridiculed and mocked Him, shouting that He should save himself and come down from the cross. However, the irony was that “*by staying on the cross*” Jesus actually revealed God. So God was revealed through the death of God’s Son.

Ironically, a group of women were watching this whole process from a distance. This is in contrast to the disciples who fled earlier. They are pictured as “just watching” and yet the emotions that they were experiencing were most probably akin to lament. These women embodied what real discipleship means even though they could only “watch”.

⁴⁵ See comments in the *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 33B: Matthew 14-28*, 844 that references Matthew 27:45-56

⁴⁶ See Amos 8:9 ; Jeremiah 15:9

⁴⁷ See Joel 2:2,31; Zephaniah 1:15 – This day of judgment is referred to as the “Day of the Lord”

⁴⁸ In Matthew 27:51-53 reference is also made to earthquakes. This is seen as a continuation of the eschatological signs during this part (cf. 24:7-8; 28:2)

⁴⁹ See the comments of M. Eugene Boring in the *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Volume VIII*, 1995, 493

⁵⁰ See Hebrews 9:7

⁵¹ Donald Hagner (1995:853) points out that this sacrificial cult still continued for about 40 years until the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. See Hagner, D.A. 1995 *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-18, Volume 33B*: Dallas Texas: Word Books Publishers. 1995, 507

⁵² See Chester, *The Message of Prayer: Approaching the Throne of Grace*. 2003, 238

When studying these words of Jesus on the cross, in reference to Psalm 22, it becomes clear what a profound message it has for us as His followers. Even though this is clearly a psalm of lament and trust, both Mark and Matthew focus only on the lament part of the psalm. Jesus felt abandoned by His own father. To be forsaken by God was also a sign of not having God's blessing on your life. The cry thus shows the depth of the desolation that Jesus must have experienced. These words also give an indication of a personal relationship that existed between Jesus and God. And this relationship is now being questioned due to the current situation.

Also, this experience of godforsakenness is something still remaining in our world today. So many people are lamenting the hardships that they are facing and the cruelties that human beings inflict on each other. So many feel that God is not present in their situations. So many cry "why me, dear God" or "how long, God". They pray, but their prayers are not answered. They experience God as being absent. They feel godforsaken. But despite this, we hold on to the promise of the resurrection. We believe that our situations will improve. While we lament our situation we try and hold on to our faith as well as to the promises in Scripture. We find an example of this in 2 Corinthians 12:9 where Paul received a promise from the Lord, saying: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"*. In our lament to the Lord, our circumstances might not change as quickly as we would have liked, but we can be sure that we will receive the comfort and strength from the Lord to carry us through our calamities. Lament might be seen as obsolete to some, especially in the face of the prosperity gospel that has become so prevalent, but as followers of Christ we can find solace in the thought that He also experienced the agony of feeling alone and He can identify with us completely.

4.5. Conclusion

The aim of chapter 4 was to look at examples of lament in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The objective of this exercise was to ascertain how these examples could guide our church in our quest for the re-discovery and the re-claiming of lament in liturgy. The exegesis of the selected scripture portions, namely: Psalm 13, Psalm 88, Matthew 2:16-18 and Mark 15:34 provided examples of how people lamented their circumstances.

These Bible narratives clearly depict the suffering people experienced in their lives and how they tried to verbalise this pain. We may be living in a different century and in a different context but we are still experiencing a host of emotions and challenges. These narrative examples allow us “a licence”, so to speak, to verbalise our challenges as well. The psalms give us the clearest examples of these situations, teaching us that life can sometimes be hard, and can break our spirit and damage our emotions.

The prayers of some Bible figures, especially the lament prayers in the psalms, sometimes sound harsh, even prompting the thought that one cannot take such a tone with God, which comes close to cursing. However, when we lament and protest to God, we are in fact holding on to God’s promises. It is exactly because we know that things can be different and better that we are impatient in the midst of our suffering. When we lament and protest, it is not because we do not trust in God. It is exactly *because* we trust in God that we dare to cry out and hope for change in our circumstances.

No one is immune against suffering. It is not just for people who “deserve” it. We are all vulnerable. As a faith community, we need to be the place where people can come in their brokenness; a place where they can verbalise their suffering, their doubts and their fears. As a church, we believe in the One who identified with the pain and suffering of people. As His disciples, we should do the same. We need to learn how to lament again and we need to learn to listen to the lament of those broken people who come to us, the church – the body of Christ. We should therefore create a space in our faith communities for lament prayers and lament rituals. This will enable other principles and ethics also to play a role. These could include the ability and practise to love and to forgive, justice, reconciliation. And when we create this space and embrace these principles and ethics we should never forget that God has ultimate control over judgment and punishment.⁵³ When this space has been afforded and the lamenter voices a desire for vengeance, it could trigger the need for retribution by the lamenter as well as fellow faith-members. It is therefore necessary to practice great caution. For Lee “*many people need a liturgical way to process feelings of suffering, sorrow, and even abandonment in their time of crisis*”.⁵⁴

⁵³ See Lee, N. 2010. *Lyrics of lament: From tragedy to transformation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2010, 183-208

⁵⁴ Ibid., 184-185

The space and structure of the liturgy, should allow for the sensitive reading of texts that might be taken out of context or exploited. When people are hungry for justice it could easily turn into a case of “vengeance will be mine”. In a world where we struggle to live together across cultures and religions, we need to be aware of the consequences of these moments of lament. Our lament should not cause more harm but should help us to have a better quality of life.

Being able to lament within our liturgies, gives us the freedom to take our daily experiences to the throne. We do not leave our pain and sorrow at the church door when we worship' it is part of our being. Witvliet is therefore of the opinion that if our worship does not include “general and specific speech” it will suffer.⁵⁵ He continues to say that “*without common words and phrases, we are cut off from the biblical and historical roots of our faith. Without specific, event-oriented language, we are left with liturgy removed from our particular time and place*”.⁵⁶ When we assemble as a faith community to worship God, we all come from different contexts which influence *how* we worship. Our liturgies must therefore, in some way, include our life experiences. For some it would mean praise and thanksgiving while others might just want to lament. Our liturgies cannot be stagnant, if we are protesting about the injustices in our communities and in our lives.

Lee concludes her book by alluding to the fact that maybe one day we will be able to sing each other's songs.⁵⁷ This statement is profound because in singing each other's songs, we become aware of the pain, suffering and joy that we experience as a people. We learn about each other's dreams, hopes and fears and thereby express our hopefulness for our future. We can join each other, cross-country and across cultures to work together for peace, hope and justice in this world.

Witvliet sums up the essence of lament as follow:

Laments, to be sure, begin with a cry against the deplorable human condition, a cry against the painfulness of the individual tragedy, a cry against the injustices of society. But laments almost never stay

⁵⁵ See Witvliet, J. 2007. *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A brief introduction & guide to resources*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2007, 29

⁵⁶ Ibid., 29

⁵⁷ See Lee, *Lyrics of lament: From tragedy to transformation*. 2010, 208

there. Having voiced our pain and struggle, laments then recite God's mighty deeds on our behalf. Remembering these deeds – even in the face of pain and struggle – brings us to praise and thanksgiving for God's fidelity and compassion. Laments give voice to our pain but lead us out of that pain by God's strength. Laments are our great prayers of hope, for they remind us that we belong to God, that God's care will sustain us and protect us, and that God's justice will – in the fullness of time – restore justice. This is the very pattern of our everyday living: from struggle to praise, from pain to remembering God's faithful goodness, from injustice to awe and wonder at the divine majesty.⁵⁸

Viewing this quotation in terms of Osmer's methodology, this is exactly *what should be happening* during our worship services. Witvliet's explanation makes it clear that our lament is not the end but the catalyst in a very long process of mixed emotions.⁵⁹ In the end, because we lament with hope and in hope, we know that our prayers will be answered.

Finally, as mentioned in chapter 1, the normative task – as referred to by Osmer – was dealt with over three chapters. Chapter 5 will conclude the normative task by discussing the theological constructions of lament.

⁵⁸ See Witvliet, *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship*. 2007, 32

⁵⁹ See Westermann, The role of lament in the theology of the Old Testament, *Interpretation* (28): 1974, 27. He makes it clear that one cannot have a relationship with God consisting exclusively of praise. Praise and lament form integral parts of our full relationship with God; one cannot have one without the other.

Chapter 5

Theological Constructions of Lament

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 forms part of the analysis of the normative task. The aim of this chapter is to look at different theological constructions of lament and how these could assist our church on the journey of re-discovering and re-claiming of lament in liturgy. The objective is to theologically engage with the different constructions.

The theme of this dissertation brings many significant questions to the fore regarding lament in liturgy. Some of the questions that people might be grappling with are: Should lament be part of the Christian life? If yes, then to what extent should lament be part of our liturgies? Some might be of the opinion that as God's children we should not have to suffer; as children of a King we should only have the best. When Christians greet each other, some have the habit of saying "God is good all the time, all the time God is good". This immediately begs the question: "If this God is so good, then why should God's children have to be in situations where they feel the need to lament?" This question highlights the tension between the goodness of God and the reality of voicing our pain and suffering through lament to this God.⁶⁰ Although there are many examples that could be explored to show this tension, the apartheid system in South Africa is probably one of the most apt examples in this regard.

The American Philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff, considers praise and lament as indeed components of a well-rounded Christian life. He pays special attention to lament in one of the chapters in his book "Hearing the Call".⁶¹ Since lament is part of the Psalms it clearly has a place in the Christian life. He further alludes to the fact that we need to make sure that we have considered fully what lament is before we start with any discussion. According to him, lament:

⁶⁰ This alludes to the discussion earlier in the dissertation where the researcher made reference to the question of theodicy in 3.1.

⁶¹ The chapter is in part one and is titled "If God is Good and Sovereign, Why Lament?"

at its heart, is *giving voice to the suffering* that accompanies deep loss, whatever that loss may be. Lament is not *about* suffering. Lament is not *concerning* suffering. Lament does not count the stages and try to identify the stage in which one finds oneself. Lament is the bringing to speech of suffering, the *linguaging* of suffering, the *voicing* of suffering. Behind lament are tears over loss. Lament goes beyond the tears to voicing the suffering.⁶²

What struck me in this chapter was Wolterstorff's opinion that we should not just name our suffering, but we should in fact *own* our suffering and make it part of our own identity, part of our life story.⁶³ We should not be ashamed of it. We should be able to verbalise our suffering eventually, being able to cry to God and ask about the meaning of our suffering. It might be difficult and embarrassing at first to own it but afterwards we are better equipped to cry to God about the injustices and to ask for deliverance. I must underline that making suffering part of our own identity and part of our life story, as Wolterstorff suggests, does not mean that we must remain in our suffering in a despondent state. Theologically speaking, if our identity and life story is rooted in God, then God is also part of our suffering. The Belhar Confession, as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, points exactly to this fact when it states that God stands with the poor and the oppressed.⁶⁴

For the early Christian theologian, St Augustine, the correctness of giving voice to suffering was questionable. Augustine explained how he wept after the death of his best friend and how, even though he tried to constrain himself, he wept over the death of his mother. He felt that his grief was a sign that he felt too much worldly affection towards them and that he should in fact have found peace, knowing that his loved ones would be in the presence of God forever. So for Augustine it was sinful to voice our suffering since it is a sign that we are holding on to worldly things. If we do voice suffering we should do it within the context of confessing our sins. We should also find our enjoyment in this world in God alone.⁶⁵ This is

⁶² See Wolterstorff, N. 2011. *Hearing the Call: Liturgy Justice Church and World*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2011, 81

⁶³ Ibid., 81

⁶⁴ See Botha, J. and Naudé, P. 2011. The Belhar Confession (1986): in Johan Botha and Piet Naudé: Good News to Confess: The Belhar Confession and the road of acceptance. Bible Media, Wellington. 2011, 22

⁶⁵ Ibid., 85

difficult to contemplate, especially when we think of how Jesus grieved openly over the death of his friend Lazarus. Wolterstorff also discusses Calvin's perception of lament. Even though Calvin differed from Augustine on this matter, he also questioned the correctness of certain components of lament. While Augustine was of the opinion that we should look away from the worldly things towards our maker, Calvin insisted that we should not see the worldly things just as God's work but also as gifts from God.⁶⁶ We should be more patient when we grieve and suffer. For him, the sufferings that we are subjected to are ways in which God directs us to repent, to be humble and to be more careful in future to the appeal of sin.⁶⁷ It would seem that the dominant message is that *"grief and suffering are manifestations of God's gracious attempt to reform us"*.⁶⁸

For Calvin, the "suffering that comes our way is for our good and we must accordingly, endure it with grateful patience".⁶⁹ This is also in line with the encouragement of Jesus Christ towards the disciples with regards to the pain and suffering that they would encounter in this world. Jesus said the following to them: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).⁷⁰ Wolterstorff engages with Calvin regarding the pain and suffering that he experienced on the death of his son. This is relevant since this is exactly the kind of questions that we ask when confronted with the loss of a loved one. Questions include "Why, dear God, is this happening to me?" and "Dear God, make the pain stop, fill this void in my life".

This chapter will consist of the following structure:

- Laughter and lament
- Lament and liturgy
- Lament and transformation
- Lament and God-images
- Lament and liminality

⁶⁶ Ibid., 87

⁶⁷ Ibid., 88

⁶⁸ Ibid., 89

⁶⁹ Ibid., 92

⁷⁰ New International Version

- Lament and hope
- Lament and healing
- Lament and anthropology/humanity

Each one of these constructions will be looked at theologically to ascertain the influence of lament and how it is perceived.

5.2. Laughter and Lament

It does not seem congruous to talk about laughter and lament at the same time as they are apparent opposites. However, laughter has been seen by many as a way to deal with difficult situations albeit it only for a brief moment. In his article *Why Worship? Revisiting a fundamental liturgical question*, Cilliers refers to the literary theorist Bakhtin who was of the opinion that some essential aspects of the world that we are living in could only be understood through laughter – an idea which was already present since Renaissance times.⁷¹

Claassens also refers to the work of Bakhtin when she uses his carnival theory during her investigation of the carnivalistic overtones in the stories of Sarah and Hagar. It might seem that this specific story should not be dealt with under this section as we cannot assume that all events in which crying occurs need be related to lament. However, Claassens referred to Patrick Miller who pointed out that in the Old Testament:

lament or the prayer for help is often ‘spontaneous, unplanned, wrenched from the experience of pain,’ but most certainly has the aim of securing help.⁷²

It is against this background that I believe that this narrative is appropriate here. The narratives of Sarah and Hagar are much more complex than would appear. Sarah’s womanhood was at stake since she was unable to bear children for her husband Abraham. She received a promise from God that she would indeed have a son but Sarah could not

⁷¹ See Cilliers, J. 2009. Why worship? Revisiting a fundamental liturgical question. in *HTS Theological Studies* 65 (1): 2009, 4

⁷² See Claassens, L.J.M. 2005. “Laughter and Tears: Carnivalistic Overtones in the Stories of Sarah and Hagar” in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (32), 2005, 303

believe this promise as the evidence in front of her was too overwhelming. She therefore laughed at the prospect of having a child at such an advanced age. Claassens points out that if this narrative is read in a Bakhtinian fashion, with the carnival laughter as background, Sarah's laughter could be seen as "*an act of internal resistance*".⁷³ Through this laughter she is able to transcend her circumstances, even though it is only for a moment. Laughter could therefore be seen as a way in which we could escape our situation, even if only for a brief moment. It is a way in which we deal with the situation at that time.

In both personal and communal lament, we share what is happening with us. In the personal lament we share with God while during the communal lament we share with God as well as with other role players. Throughout the process of lament, we still trust God, although at times it does not appear to be so. In his article *Nervous Laughter: Lament, Death Anxiety, and Humor*, the American Theologian Donald Capps, looks at the influence that death has on humour. He refers to the fact that death actually inspires humour.⁷⁴ He gives a couple of examples of how humour can help people to cope with the different stages of the grieving process. He divides these stages into:

- i) Stage 1: Announcement of Terminal Illness
- ii) Stage 2: The Deathbed Scene
- iii) Stage 3: The Funeral
- iv) Stage 4: The Great Unknown
- v) Stage 5: How will they manage when I am gone?⁷⁵

Different jokes are normally used for each category and it seems that this is to assist the affected person to deal with their anxieties about death in a lighthearted manner. However, Capps clearly points out his understanding of the function of humour, namely:

it is not that jokes about death may help someone who is grieving
the loss of a loved one. Nor is it to make a case for the sensitive use

⁷³ Ibid., 300

⁷⁴ See Capps, D. 2005. *Nervous Laughter: Lament, Death Anxiety, and Humor*. In S.A. Brown and P.D. Miller (eds.), *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. 2005, 70-79

⁷⁵ Ibid., 74-77

of humor in funerals. Instead, their value relates to the fact that almost everyone has anxieties about death that are never far from our consciousness: yet we do not talk about them much.⁷⁶

When we go through painful experiences in our lives, we sometimes do not know whether we should laugh or cry. Joking about our situation is a mechanism to deal with the serious issues at hand in a light-hearted manner; simultaneously it could be a way in which we resist what is happening to us.

5.3. Lament and Liturgy

Lament and liturgy should not be seen as two separate entities. Lament should be and could be part of the existing liturgy in our church (the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa), hence the title of this dissertation “*Lament in liturgy*”. In some instances we are so rushed to move to doxology in our liturgy that we leave behind those who are in need of lament. In fact, we sometimes suppress our need to lament and move very quickly to praise because this is what we are use to. Perhaps this act brings a number of questions to the fore as to why the need to lament within URCSA is neglected. Why do we only find elements of lament in our liturgy, and mostly in prayer? Why does lament not feature more prominently? How do we understand lament in liturgy within URCSA? These are important questions for this research because the hope is that the inclusion of lament in liturgy would provide an opportunity for people to give language to their pain and ultimately start on the road of healing.

Baglyos is of the opinion that “*where lament is precluded or censored, so are lamenting people*”.⁷⁷ His article deals specifically with the rural church and how lament should be recovered in their liturgies. However, on the strength of his article, I am of the opinion that the ideas expressed could work for any church regardless of location. Baglyos adds the questions that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 77-78

⁷⁷ See Baglyos, P, 2009. “Lament in the Liturgy of the Rural Church: An Appeal for Recovery” in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36 (4): 2009, 253. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCHOST (accessed 15 June 2010)

suffering human beings address to God is not a rural question but a “*human question*”.⁷⁸ However, rural people would of course have their own unique problems with which they would be wrestling.

In most of our congregations we have praise and worship teams that lead the congregation in song before the service starts. Lament rarely forms part of this timeslot; lamenting people would not really be part of the liturgy at that point. Baglyos pleads for the recovery of lament in worship so that lamenting people “*might receive a new welcome in the company of God and the godly without having to check their lament at the gate or acquiesce to an idolatrous demand for praise*”.⁷⁹

Another important point that Baglyos makes is that we should take care not to introduce lament in the liturgy for the purpose of liturgical variety only. He is of the opinion that “*genuine lament is always contextual and circumstantial*”.⁸⁰ It is therefore important for ministers, or whoever is in charge of creating the liturgy, to be sensitively aware of the context and circumstances of the faith community that they will be serving. The biblical psalms of lament offer different examples and resources for a recovery of lament in the liturgy. The inclusion of lament questions in Psalms like Psalm 42 (“*Why have you forgotten me?*”) or Psalm 88 (“*O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me?*”) warrant their use in the liturgy.

The various liturgies in our church allow the congregation to share their experiences with each other and with God; allowing them to be honest before God and each other. Lamenting is also being honest about what one is going through. It allows one to verbalise and share one's suffering. If one does not share the suffering, chances are that one will forfeit healing and justice or even healing and hope. And we should also have the opportunity to share this truth in our liturgies. Wolterstorff, in his article *Liturgy, Justice and Tears*⁸¹, makes it clear that through the process of liturgy we have a vehicle to voice the injustices of the past and the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 253. The questions that Baglyos pose are the same for South African people today

⁷⁹ Ibid., 254

⁸⁰ Ibid., 261

⁸¹ See Wolterstorff, N, 1988. “Liturgy, justice and tears” in *Worship* 62, (5): 1988, 386. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCHOST (accessed 25 February 2011).

present. He has been exploring the connection between liturgy, justice and tears and has come to the understanding that it is our suffering that shapes our participation in the liturgy. Our liturgy does not stand in isolation from our daily experiences and our realities. Wolterstorff also points out that we are not the only ones who speak during the process of liturgy: we are entering into the sphere of God and therefore we must realize that God speaks and acts as well.

A classical example of how lament could be introduced into liturgy is dealt with in the work by Kathleen D. Billman and Daniel L. Migliore in *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*.⁸² They tell the story of a pastor, Lydia Villanueva, who ministered in a Lutheran church in a predominantly Hispanic community. Despite the deaths of neighbourhood children due to drugs and violence, everything seemed to continue normally in the worship services of this faith community. They had weekly communion services that featured joyous liturgies and contemporary music and all seemed to be well in this community. Villanueva was not happy with the practise of the church to rent out the church hall for community parties and gatherings. However, this was a practise that had been observed before she arrived. Although it was intended to be an act of hospitality, to keep the community together, as well as generating funds, the alcohol abuse that occurred at these parties was the cause of fights that would erupt quite regularly. She did not know how to address the issue but received a breakthrough during a Hebrew translation practicum that she attended. The passage of Amos 6:1a, 4-6 was dealt with and she received a vision that she was compelled to preach.

The image of people partying coupled with the lack of visible grief and protest over the children being destroyed was so powerful that she felt it was literally a vision that she was called to preach.⁸³

That Sunday she shared her epiphany with the congregation and called them to a new accountability for the use of their church hall and in the larger scheme of things, for the lives

⁸² See Billman, Kathleen D. and Migliore, Daniel L. 1999. *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*. Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press. 1999, 130-134

⁸³ Ibid., 131

of the children in the community. Instead of being judgmental the people began to cry and she realised that they were in fact hiding from their pain because they did not know how to handle the situation.

Villanueva began to plan another service in which she was going to give the people a chance to lament, to grieve and reflect about the things happening in their community. She informed her congregation that there would be a special time put aside during the All Saint's Day service. This would serve as a memorial for those who have died and who continue to die because of the violence in their community and the neighbourhood. She kept the overall liturgy of the service familiar to the congregation.

Opening service of gathering, confession, and praise; the proclamation of the Word through Scripture readings and sermon; and the response to the Word through the offering and the prayers of the people. The service ended with the celebration of communion.⁸⁴

The special memorial part was placed after the prayers of the people, just *before* the liturgy of the communion. The memorial ritual was done with "*five ritual activities that involved tangible symbols and physical action on the part of the participants*".⁸⁵ The five activities were made up of the following:

- The first activity invited the remembrance of departed loved ones. Candles were lit while a prayer was offered for God to comfort those in mourning.
- The second activity involved the distribution of flowers and if so wished, the names of the departed ones. The flowers were put in a vase and placed upon the communion table.
- The third activity dealt with the "*bitter tears that choke us', symbolized with salt water*".⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid., 131

⁸⁵ Ibid., 131

⁸⁶ Ibid., 132

- The fourth activity allowed the congregation to move from *“a cry of pain and protest to a prayer for God’s help in recovering from loss and sorrow and includes the treasuring of the memory of the loved ones”*.⁸⁷ Honey was used as a symbol in this activity, to represent the sweetness the loved ones had brought to their families. People were invited to dip their fingers into the honey and taste it while a unison prayer marked the end of this activity.
- The final ritual looks to the future. *“The God who forgives sins, heals infirmities, frees life from the grave, fills with love and tenderness, and rejuvenates the weary like an eagle (Psalm 103:1-5) is blessed, and the participants are signed with consecrated oil. After the blessing and sharing of the peace, a festive communion service begins”*.⁸⁸

It makes so much sense to have such a ritual just before communion is served. It allows for people to share their grief, but not as people without hope. Anderson rightly said that *“rituals help to create public acts that bear witness to the reality and death, and, thereby initiate healing grief”*.⁸⁹ This community was forced to acknowledge the realities of death and destruction in their community. The communion that they shared reiterated the fact that our hope is in the resurrected Lord.⁹⁰ Villanueva found the response to this special service overwhelming. People were sharing their stories with each other and remembering their loved ones. This service is now a tradition in St. Mary’s Hope and its aim is still the same, namely to provide *“a place for lament within the structures of congregational worship, so that people might experience solidarity in their suffering and inspiration to be agents of God’s hope”*.⁹¹

Not all services that deal with lament need to be shaped quite in the same way as at St. Mary’s Hope. It could of course be an element in a traditional service that functions to focus the prayer of lament towards a specific issue. The lament prayer could therefore be introduced into the regular Sunday worship as well as in worship services such as funerals, baptism and

⁸⁷ Ibid., 132

⁸⁸ Ibid., 132

⁸⁹ See Anderson, H. 2010. “How rituals heals” in *Word & World 30 (1)*: 2010, 44. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCHOST (accessed 15 June 2010)

⁹⁰ I would like to reiterate my concern about the few times that some of our congregations in URCSA can celebrate Holy Communion owing to the limited number of ordained ministers

⁹¹ See Billman, Migliore, and Daniel, *Rachel’s Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*. 1999, 132

healing services. Each congregation will have to find creative ways on how they could have lament as part of the existing liturgy. We are all gifted differently and in order to tap into a creative way of doing things it makes sense that more than one person should be involved in this process.

This idea of Villaneuva, on the significance of lament in the liturgy, brings to mind the recent tragic event in Nigeria at a building of the Church of All Nations of Bishop TB Joshua (founder of The Synagogue). The building collapsed on 12 September 2014. 85 South Africans lost their lives and others were seriously injured. The incident shocked the South African nation. What also made it worse was that families had to wait almost two months to receive the remains of their loved ones. This prolonged the agony of finding closure in this tragic event. As can be expected people had mixed feelings about this incident. But what stood out were the questions that people had. People questioned the structure of the building but some also questioned the faithfulness of God within all this turmoil.

The question now remains: Will Bishop TB Joshua continue with his services as normal? Or will he make room within the liturgy for congregants to lament the death of so many innocent lives? As a leader in this church, what example did he set with regards to lament in the liturgy? It would be difficult for this church to continue as normal without lamenting to God about this tragedy. The same can be said about the South African congregations where the families of the deceased are worshipping. These families are most probably still wrestling with many questions over the death of their loved ones. And they should find solace within their congregations.⁹²

5.4. Lament and Transformation

Reading, reflecting and holding on to the *dark psalms* could be seen as failure by some; failure of God to respond to our needs and to take care of us, as well as a faith that has failed us personally. However, a faith community that trusts in God would use these psalms as an act

⁹² See <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-09-18-victims-of-church-collapse-include-overseas-nationals> (Accessed 01 December 2014); See also <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/final-journey> (Accessed 01 December 2014).

of bold, transformed faith. Brueggemann views this from two perspectives: on the one hand the world must be experienced as it is, and on the other hand the lamentable situation offers an opportunity to discuss the disorder with God.⁹³ Our whole life should be open for discussion with God, not just segments of it. He continues to say that this kind of a faith can only be a *transformed* faith – that is, faith in a very different type of God, who participates actively in our joys, in our sorrows, in every facet of our lives.

Another aspect of this transformation is that it is not only our faith that is transformed, but also life itself, as we experience it. We are confronted with our daily realities and we are prompted to think the unthinkable, to have feelings that we may consider illegitimate. We arrive in the presence of God where things are not always polite and civil. Brueggemann points out that Israel did not banish or deny this darkness from their religious enterprise but embraced the darkness, through these dark psalms, as the very new life that awaits them.

Through our relationship with God we are being transformed continually. It would be pretentious to believe that our relationship with God consists only of praise and worship. Suffering and pain are fundamental elements in the life of the believer. The Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann verbalises his understanding of a relationship with God as follows:

it is an illusion to suppose or to postulate that there could be a relationship with God in which there is only praise and never lamentation. Just as joy and sorrow in alternation are a part of the finitude of human existence, so praise and lamentation are part of man's relationship with God.⁹⁴

Wolterstorff is also of the opinion that suffering does not affect only the sufferer. He states clearly that suffering should be "*brought before God*".⁹⁵ Most importantly, he points out that the true function of lament is in actual fact *prayer*, and that our prayers embody hope that God

⁹³ See Brueggemann, W. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House. 1984, 52

⁹⁴ See Westermann, C. 1981. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Tr. KR Crim and RN Soulen. Edinburg: T.T Clark. 1981, 267

⁹⁵ See Wolterstorff, "Liturgy, justice and tears". 1988, 394

will transform our pain and suffering, whether individual or communal. Wolterstorff argues that because sufferers bring their pain before the One who can take it away, lament can be seen as a “*movement toward God*”.⁹⁶ At first glance this sounds contradictory, given the assumption that God's moving away from us is what is causing us to experience pain and suffering in our lives. This feeling of alienation from God is also verbalised in Psalm 13 where the Psalmist asks: “*How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*” However, towards the end of this psalm a renewed faith in the Lord is uttered. The lament changes in fact to a song of praise.

But how exactly can we embody transformation through a process of lament? What is it exactly that we should be doing? Ackermann suggests that we need to take our longing for healing to the space of *public lament*.⁹⁷ She is of the opinion that public expression of our hurt and pain carries the potential toward obtaining healing for our communities. This expression of public lament in the community should be done as a *liturgical act*. Ackermann's discussion assumes a new angle when she ponders whether it would not be appropriate for perpetrators to lament as well. We normally consider only the victims of crime, but Ackermann forces us to think about the perpetrator as well when she uses David's lament as an example. She continues to make it clear that we can actually not afford not to lament.

We can lament the misuse of power and privilege, and our lack of courage in not standing up to evil and injustice. Mothers can lament for their sons drafted into the defence force and emerging after two years, scarred and depressed, cynical or ready to leave for far shores, while at the same time remembering other mothers whose sons were tortured, imprisoned, killed and exiled in the cause of the same ideology of white power.⁹⁸

These are but a few issues that Ackermann touches upon that should make us want to lament in order for our communities to deal with their pain and anger. And in South Africa and Africa we have plenty to lament about. To cite one example in this regard the issue of Boko

⁹⁶ Ibid., 394

⁹⁷ See Ackermann, D.M. 1998. ‘Take Up a Taunt Song’: Women, Lament and Healing. In Lagerwerf, L. (ed.) *Reconstruction: The WCC Assembly Harare 1998 and the Churches in Southern Africa*. Meinema: Zoetermeer. 1998, 132-150

⁹⁸ Ibid., 145

Haram⁹⁹, in Nigeria, comes to mind. The so-called Boko Haram group kidnapped more than 200 girls from school and they are still kept in custody since September 2014. Amongst the video clips which were made available by the group on social media, it is shown how these girls had to marry some of their kidnappers. Until this day, the families of these young girls are living with the pain and uncertainty.

Boko Haram did not only kidnap these girls but they are also said to be responsible for a reign of terror in Nigeria. News reports claim that Boko Haram has been threatening people who do not want to accept Islam as their religion. Nigerian people, the African people and the world at large are lamenting this dreadful situation. One can only imagine what this means for the church in Nigeria and how they need to support their members.¹⁰⁰

5.5. Lament and God-images

One's image of God relates to how one conceptualizes God. Simultaneously the image of God is subject to change throughout one's life and this could be influenced by the issues that present themselves. As children we grow up thinking of God mostly in masculine terms only. The stories that we were told in Sunday school as well as the pictures we saw in our story books impressed on our minds that God is a white man with long flowing hair and a long beard. In most cases we also just think of God as our Father. Even when we pray it is not unusual to start our prayer with "*Heavenly Father*" or "*Dear Father...*". It is also not strange to hear prayers from our pulpits that start with "*God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob!*" We seldom hear "*God of Sarah, God of Hannah and God of Ruth*". Why is that? Even women tend to pray in this paternal manner. Why is it difficult for us to think about and pray to God while using maternal images?

⁹⁹ Boko Haram are officially called "People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad". They are a militant Islamist movement and have claimed responsibility for various violent attacks in Nigeria over the years. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram (Accessed 01 December 2014).

¹⁰⁰ See <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/01/world/africa/nigeria-boko-haram-denies-deal/> (Accessed 01 December 2014). See also an article by the Catholic News Service in which the "*Nigerian Church pleads for world to witness its trauma*" <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/WCRThisWeek/Stories/tabid/61/entryid/2804/Nigerian-Church-pleads-for-world-to-witness-its-trauma.aspx> (Accessed 01 December 2014).

Claassens makes it very clear in her book “’n Groter God¹⁰¹” that the language we use to talk about God assists in creating the images we have about God and this in turn influences how we live our lives.¹⁰² This trend of thought is also confirmed by Terence Fretheim, an Old Testament scholar, who says that “*images used to speak of God not only decisively determine the way one thinks about God, they have a powerful impact on the shape of the life of the believer*”.¹⁰³ He continues to point out that the church has been so busy focusing on whether a person believes in God that she has neglected to investigate in what kind of God we believe in. We may not think or talk about God with maternal images in mind but we do incorporate nurturing characteristics in our God image. Claassens also refers to the work of Van Wijk-Bos, where God is portrayed as a rock, a leopard, a father, a woman giving birth and many other images.¹⁰⁴ In this book she pleads for a more generous understanding of God and she discusses the various ways in which God is referred to, and understood, in the Bible.

In South Africa, where we have such a high rate of crime, we can ask ourselves “*What kind of God do we believe in?*” The rape victim, the high-jack victim, and many others – in what kind of a God do they believe? What kind of a God-image do they have?

In the book of Psalms we have many examples where people look at the world around them and feel as if God has forgotten about them. Psalms 22, 44, 88 and 143 are but a few of these psalms that reveal a sense that God is far from God's people. The psalmist's image of God is that God:

- is far;
- is hiding His face;
- is asleep;
- is forgetful and
- has rejected them.

¹⁰¹ [A greater God]

¹⁰² See Claassens, J. 2009. *’n Groter God: Nuut gedink oor die Een wat ons telkens verras*. Epping: ABC Boekdrukkers. 2009, 9

¹⁰³ See Fretheim, T.E. 1984. *The suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1984,

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¹⁰⁴ See Claassens, *’n Groter God: Nuut gedink oor die Een wat ons telkens verras*. 2009, 12

Through their prayers, these people of faith cried out to the Lord and pleaded for mercy, for improvement of change in their circumstances!

*My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far
from saving me,
so far from the words
of my groaning?
(Psalm 22:1, NIV)*

*Awake, O Lord!
Why do you sleep?
Rouse yourself!
Do not reject us forever.
Why do you hide your face
and forget our misery
and oppression?
(Psalm 44:23-24, NIV)*

*Why, O Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?
(Psalm 88:14, NIV)*

*Answer me quickly, O Lord;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me...
(Psalm 143:7, NIV)*

These words that were cried centuries ago are still echoed today by the faith community. People still feel that God is far from them and that He does not hear their cries.

5.6. Lament and Liminality

The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms describes liminality as follows:

A term used by theologians, in light of sociological and anthropological studies, to describe rites of passage in life as especially 'sacred' or 'religious'.

This provides a way to study the roles and places of religious experiences in social structures.¹⁰⁵

Liminality, in the context of lament, could be understood as the process of movement from lament to praise. That in-between space where one experiences the "not-yet" but also gets glimpses of what you are hoping for. This transitional state is not an easy place to be in the process of lament because it tests one's faith to the limit, posing the uncertainty between acknowledging one's loss but also realizing that adaptations are looming. Cilliers describes liminality as the "experience of being *in limbo*", a state that essentially "*implies an ambiguous phase between two situations or statuses*".¹⁰⁶

Although it is believed that this liminal displacement could offer potential in terms of creating new relations and even dreaming differently it could contain potential danger. The sense of displacement could easily inhibit one's belief system, causing a set-back in one's spiritual life. In this liminal space it is possible to experience the presence and absence of the "not-yet".

Cilliers also mentions metaphors for liminality and mentions that the tomb, the wilderness and the exile could probably be seen as the most representative.¹⁰⁷ Different nuances of liminality are articulated in these metaphors, namely:

the tomb that speaks of grief and pain (lament) that is associated with the leaving behind of old structures of identity and security; the wilderness suggests the possibility of having new and surprising encounters with God

¹⁰⁵ See McKim, D.K. 1996. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. 1996, 161-162

¹⁰⁶ See Cilliers, J. 2008. Worshipping in the "in-between" times of transition: reflections on the liminality of liturgy. In H. Pieterse & C. Thesnaar (eds.), *A Faithful witness. Essays*. Wellington: Bybel Media. 2008, 26

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 27

(re-framing); the exile sharpens the sense of longing, of looking forward to the alternative of the promised land (anticipation).

It seems that when you are stripped of everything that has made sense to you, God can be experienced in ways that you have never experienced before; and this is only possible in that place of liminality. I must agree with Cilliers when he claims that “*liminality is without question an integral part of the life of faith, and therefore also the life of worship*”.¹⁰⁸ I would further suggest that just as liminality is an important part of the life of faith, so is lament. Liminality and lament cannot be separated because liminality could lead to lament. In this state of liminality there are no hiding places; things are in the open and the process of lament gives voice to the liminal displacement that one is experiencing.

Just as liminality and lament goes hand in hand, so does liminality and vulnerability. These in-between spaces can cause great vulnerability. Cilliers explains how South Africans are living with “*the in-between spaces*” of paradoxes on a daily basis.¹⁰⁹ He mentions the paradox between “*extremely poor and extremely rich*”, the paradox in the living conditions of South Africans where you have people living in mansions and a few kilometers away people are living in shacks, to name but a few.¹¹⁰ And these “*in-between spaces of paradox*”¹¹¹ can cause great vulnerability. We need to take cognisance of this vulnerability and address it in a very sensitive manner, especially in terms of homiletics. This will link closely with the manner in which we address lament in liturgy. Cilliers proposed that the key notions of *seeing, sighing and signing* could assist us with the shape of this vulnerable homiletic.¹¹²

The *seeing* we find in homiletics. Cilliers alluded to the fact that “*preachers are called to discern everyday experiences as religious experiences, and to interpret them as such to those who listen to their preaching*”.¹¹³ Since these everyday experiences might be traumatic, the preacher would need

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 28

¹⁰⁹ See Cilliers, J. 2014. *Seeing, Sighing, Signing: Countours of a vulnerable homiletic*. Unpublished article, 2014, 2. The paper was delivered at the 11th bi-annual meeting of *The Societas Homiletica*.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2

¹¹² Ibid., 2

¹¹³ Ibid., 5

to sensitive and observant to their audience. And it is during times like these that the *seeing* could lead to *sighing*. This *language of sighing* helps us to verbalise our laments in an honest manner when we address God.¹¹⁴ Cilliers makes it clear that this sighing is not a way in which we can bypass our responsibilities in terms of the role we play in transformation. It is “*a profound ethical act;...the onset of the interruption of the status quo*”.¹¹⁵ Through the notion of signing we are able to perceive another reality – seeking a different sign, a different reality, to what we are confronted with. Signing provides us with “*an alternative imagination*” and this gives us hope for the future.¹¹⁶

These key notions, proposed by Cilliers, make perfect sense when linking it with the issue that this research is grappling with. We lament because we *see* the injustices in our society, we *sigh* because of these injustices and we move towards a homiletics of signing because we want to experience “*God's future as reality in the presence*”.¹¹⁷

5.7. Lament and Hope

When we hope, we dream of something better than what we are experiencing. We believe, with everything in us, that our circumstances will change for the better. As a faith community, our trust is in the Lord and the promises we have received in His Word. In Hebrews 11:1 we read “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*”.¹¹⁸ If we were to see and experience what we are hoping for then we could not call it hope anymore. Despite the fact that we question – even blame – God extensively during our periods of lament, our trust is still in God. This trust is proven by the “yet” that is always referred to, even in the most accusatory of laments. This is a faith in the Holy One and a hope that is expressed through faith that God will respond to our needs.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 10

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 10

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 14

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 13

¹¹⁸ Quoted from *New International Version*

Keshgegian is of the opinion that we need to re-imagine hope anew. For her, hope is fundamentally something that needs to be practiced.¹¹⁹ It is *a process* and should become part of our habits. It would seem that the miracle of hope lies in the practicing of it. Practicing hope?! Is that possible? One tends to think that hope is some emotion that gets “imagined” because of our circumstances, something that we yearn for, that is different to our current experiences. However, Keshgegian shares the philosophy of a German political theologian, Dorothee Soelle, who explained the idea of hope as a baby that starts to walk by getting up and taking the steps.

Similarly with hope, we will learn to hope anew as we practice hope... we will gain confidence in hope as we enter more deeply into the practices of hope.¹²⁰

I agree with Keshgegian in her thoughts of hope. Hoping is really an act of faith. Perhaps one could even venture further in saying that without hope, especially in times of suffering, life would have been more difficult. It is this hope, which is so tightly connected in our faith, that keeps us going – no matter what! The process of hope does not change our circumstances literally but it forces us to think about our situation again – to visualize what we want our situation to look like. If we do not have the capacity to imagine – to dream, how are we going to speak about hope? How are we going to imagine a new future? For Keshgegian, “*the power and role of imagination is to give voice and content to our heart’s desire. The practice of dreaming helps to connect our desires with our imagination*”.¹²¹ We might have to learn the art of imagination again from children. They can so innocently live in their own imaginary world in which they experience contentment and joy. We have achieved so much in our world because of people who dared to dream as well as people who worked hard to make those dreams a reality.

The process of hope also makes us acutely aware that we are not happy with what we are currently experiencing and therefore the process of lament allows us to work through these emotions. Just as hope is a process, so lament is also a process – painful but necessary. To

¹¹⁹ See Keshgegian, F. 2006. *Time for Hope: Practices for living in today’s world*. New York/London: Continuum. 2006, 182-183

¹²⁰ Ibid., 188

¹²¹ Ibid., 201

hope, to lament, and to mourn takes time. In the culture of our churches where we have lost, or barely practice the process of lament, it will probably take even longer to go through this lamenting process. This is a process in which we need to make time to remember and to hope anew; these processes of lament and hope are also catalysts for the healing process to start.

Another argument of Keshgegian is that “*hope is ultimately a social habit, not simply a personal and spiritual one*”.¹²² She is also of the opinion that we need the support of others if we want to engage in the practice of hope just as we would need to support others in their own practice. Our hopes and dreams for ourselves and our families will ultimately also have an effect on others with whom we interact. Interconnectedness exists in our communities and this ultimately has an impact on our relationships.

5.8. Lament and Healing

South Africa’s legacy of apartheid has caused much damage in this country. In an attempt to heal the hurt of the nation and to rebuild the nation in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) heard the stories of many victims, survivors and perpetrators. The editors of the collection of essays in *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, Botman and Petersen reflected in the introduction on the work of the TRC.

As a nation we are confronting the demons of our past to exorcise them so that we may build the kind of community reconciled to face the future. It is about confession, but not only that. It is also about the truth, but it is much more than that as well. The crux of it all is how these things hold together in the interest of national reconciliation.¹²³

It also makes sense that as individuals we are confronting the demons of the present and need to be truthful about the process. This process could ultimately be a process of lament which it is hoped will lead to healing. However, the process does force us to acknowledge our past.

¹²² Ibid., 204

¹²³ See Botman, H.R. and Petersen, R.M. (eds.), 1996. *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau. 1996, 10

Ackermann believes that we should have a desire to move forward “*but to do so in a manner which is truly healing and reconciling*”.¹²⁴ She continues:

... we need to lament the injustice and the pain of the past before we can hope for meaningful reconciliation. For some it may seem wholly inappropriate to suggest lament at a time when there is so much to celebrate. But if we do not deal with the past injustice and suffering both by hearing it and lamenting, it will continue to haunt our spirits and sully our efforts to heal our society.¹²⁵

In this quotation Ackermann is referring to the legacy of apartheid and how she is concerned that whites in South Africa should not miss out on the process of reconciliation, a view that applies equally for individuals who are struggling with issues that cause them much pain. So whether it is a nation in search of reconciliation or an individual in search of healing, we all need to go through a process of lament so that we can learn a language in which to express our grief and disillusionment. This will also allow us to “*seek God’s compassionate presence in the work of healing*”.¹²⁶

Ackermann touches upon the fact that “*the very act of lament calls for accountability and for awareness*”, adding that in most cases we are not ready for this acknowledgement.¹²⁷ She is of the opinion that this language of lament should be practiced publicly. The best place to retrieve lament is in the ritual actions of communities of faith. This is the place where believers come together to seek the face of God;

“space and time can be made in liturgies for the engagement of the entire community in acts of lamentation, followed by acts of reconciliation”.¹²⁸

In other words, as a faith community, we should make space in our existing liturgies, or create new ones, for the process of lament and reconciliation. I want to reiterate that our liturgy for

¹²⁴ See Ackermann, D, 1996. “On hearing and lamenting: Faith and Truth-telling” in Botman, H.R. and Petersen, R.M. (eds.), *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, 1996:48.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 52

¹²⁶ Ibid., 55

¹²⁷ Ibid., 54-55

¹²⁸ Ibid., 55

Holy Communion could be used in this regard, since it provides a space for acknowledging that we are a broken people but through the blood of Christ we find healing and reconciliation around the Table.

5.9. Lament and Anthropology/Humanity

In the African tradition the notion of humanity might be explained through the principle of *ubuntu* (one is a human being through others). Through our relationships with one another we learn about ourselves, others and life. We are parts of communities that perhaps have set ideas about certain issues; for example, women are seen as “weaker” than men, or men are expected not to cry, etc. The idea that men should not cry places them in quite a predicament, especially in terms of lamenting. This contrasts markedly to Scripture.

In the section on reflections on death and mourning rituals Gerald Arbuckle, a social anthropologist, talks in length about the rituals that were practised in the Ancient Near East.

Mourners tore their clothes and dressed in sackcloth. We read that ‘David then took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did the same. They mourned and wept and fasted until the evening for Saul and his son Jonathan’ (2 Sam 1:11f).¹²⁹

He alludes further to the order of the rites as stipulated by the prophet Zechariah (12:11-14) and the fact that tears should be shed at the appropriate time (Mal 2:13). Another important aspect mentioned was that of professional mourners, in particular women. These women were supposed to be “*intimately involved in the ritual to remind people that death has occurred and grief must be openly expressed*”.¹³⁰ It would however be incorrect to suggest that only women could be mourners. Weems draws our attention to the prophet Jeremiah, who was:

unashamed to weep over sin. Scattered throughout his prophecy are lamentations and confessions of anguish that have earned him the

¹²⁹ See Arbuckle, G.A. 1991. *Grieving for change: A spirituality for refounding gospel communities*. London: Geoffrey Chapman. 1991, 63

¹³⁰ Ibid., 63

title of the 'weeping prophet' (Jeremiah 9:1,ff). Whereas other prophets are remembered for the grandeur of their prophecy, Jeremiah is remembered for his inability to hide his feelings. In our society Jeremiah would be considered a 'cry baby'.¹³¹

Weems also refers to the fact that women were "*professional mourners*", a profession which was recognized in ancient times (for example Jeremiah 9:17).¹³² Given the above information, we need to ask ourselves why we seldom make room, if ever, for men in our faith communities to cry. Why does our society have the impression that men who cry are showing signs of weakness when it is in fact a way in which they can share their pain and anguish?

5.10. Conclusion

Chapter 5 engaged with the different theological constructions of lament. This provided insight into how lament forms part of these constructions in our everyday lives. Life, for the most part, is full of challenges and some of these challenges can cause a great deal of distress. If we do not acknowledge the hurt and pain that we are experiencing as a people, we will not have any form of lament. These theological constructions force us to re-think the concepts carefully. It also challenges us to look differently at the concept of lament if we are to make any lasting changes in the approach to our liturgies.

During my research people would enquire about the topic that I am dealing with. When I answered "*lament in liturgy*", they would ask me "*What is that?*" I would then first translate the term *lament* into Afrikaans and after a few minutes of discussion and explanations they would steadily become part of the conversation. So when I was reading the book of Kathleen O'Connor¹³³, *Lamentations: The Tears of the World*, where she stated in the preface that the book of "*Lamentations hardly needs interpretation for peoples who live in the ruins of destroyed cities, whose*

¹³¹ See Weems, R.J. 1988. *Just a sister away: A womanist vision on women's relationships in the Bible*. California: LuraMedia. 1988, 59

¹³² Ibid., 58

¹³³ Kathleen O'Connor is a Professor of Old Testament.

societies are decimated by genocide, or who barely subsist in the face of famine and poverty"¹³⁴ it raised some pertinent questions, namely:

- Do we not understand lamentations because we are living fairly easy and decent lives in comparison with war-torn countries?
- We also struggle with issues in our country, such as homophobic attacks, violence, corrective-rape, corruption, and many more. Should we not be lamenting about these issues? Or have we *accepted* that what is happening in our country is part of the reality that we are living in, and that we will not be able to make a difference by lamenting about these issues?

And yet, through the process of lament we can create a platform – a language – where we can tell each other that things are not the way that they should be. Through the process of lament we can reclaim our compassion for one another. O'Connor is of the opinion that without a book such as *Lamentations* we will find it difficult to hear the distress cries of people in our communities and in the world. And if we are unable to hear these cries of distress, how will we be able to provide safe spaces in our church for people to share their struggles? Identifying the particular cry of stress gives us an opportunity to create a space in our liturgies where these issues can be lamented. While grappling with the normative task we need to engage in interdisciplinary thinking. This will assist us to bring different fields into conversation. When we listen to the stories of people we inevitably need to listen with a "therapeutic psychological ear" but we can also not forget to "theologically reflect" on the issue at hand.

The previous three chapters grappled with the issue of "what should be going on" in our church. But these chapters do not provide us with strategies of action that we could use as guidelines in our liturgies, specifically with the pertinent inclusion of lament in our liturgies. These strategies of action form part of the pragmatic task of practical theological

¹³⁴ See O'Connor, K. 2002. *Lamentations: The Tears of the World*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 2002, xiv

interpretation. And this is exactly what we will be looking at in the next chapter with reference to the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

Chapter 6

Holy Communion

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 will focus on the pragmatic task, namely “how should we respond?” The aim of this chapter is therefore to look at the feasibility of including lament in liturgy through the sacrament of the Holy Communion. Osmer¹ is of the opinion that servant leadership is needed in order to perform the pragmatic task. This leadership takes three forms, namely (i) task competence² (ii) transactional leadership³ and (iii) transforming leadership. Suffice to say that all three leadership methods are needed in a congregation. However, the transforming leadership is quite important with regards to the revisiting and the reclaiming of lament in the liturgie. This is a process that would demand a congregation to be open for a deep change in their liturgy. For Osmer transforming leadership is

leading an organization through a process in which its identity, mission, culture, and operating procedures are fundamentally altered. In a congregation this may involve changes in its worship, fellowship, outreach, and openness to new members who are different. It involves projecting a vision of what the congregation might become and mobilizing followers who are committed to this vision.⁴

This is not an easy process and it could be very risky and traumatic for those who are involved. However, the hypothesis of this research makes the proposition that if the church wants to be relevant in the lives of her members today she would need to go through a process of discernment and look anew at how lament is incorporated in the liturgy.

¹ See Osmer, R. 2008. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 2008, 176-178

² Ibid., 176. This is the ability of successfully performing the tasks of a leadership role in an organisation. As a minister you would be obliged to carry out different tasks like preaching, teaching, pastoral counselling, advising committees. You need to carry these tasks out with a high level of competency.

³ Ibid., 176-177. In this type of leadership you need to be able to influence others through exchanges. In the ministry this type of leadership is specifically helpful when organisations start to compete for resources.

⁴ Ibid., 177

This chapter consists of the following:

- Scholarly views on Holy Communion
- Views from the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document
- The new covenant
- The Eucharistic Theology of Denise Ackerman

Through the theological engagement of these different themes, an attempt will be made to show that an existing sacrament of our church, namely the Holy Communion, could in fact serve as a catalyst with regards to the “healing and hope” that is referred to in the research question.

6.1.1. Scholarly views on Holy Communion

The Eucharist⁵ is described as “*a gift from the Lord*”⁶ to the Church. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25⁷, St Paul wrote:

...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ (cf. Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).

These are the instituting words of this sacrament. This is a common historical event even though we might not be able to reconstruct the exact course of events. However, in all the narratives it is clear that the bread and wine was distributed. Jesus also made guiding announcements regarding the bread and the wine and He gave instructions that it should be repeated⁸. The above mentioned texts are the only places where we find the institution words

⁵ This sacrament has different names, depending on one’s tradition (Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, Breaking of the Bread). In our congregation older people tend to refer to the Eucharist as “die Avondmahl” while the younger generation refers to it as “Nagmaal”. Also see Stookey’s notes in “Eucharist: Christ’s feast with the Church”, 172-174. The words Eucharist and Holy Communion will be used interchangeably in this section.

⁶ See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper 111). 1982. World Council of Churches: Geneva. 1982, 14

⁷ See *Holy Bible: New International Version*.

⁸ See D.J. Smit’s section “Die prediking by die Nagmaal”. *Riglyne vir Nagmaals prediking*. (Red.) C.W. Burger, B.A. Müller en D.J. Smit, (NG Kerk-Uitgewers: Kaap), 1982, 11-32

in detail. For Jeremias⁹, Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 might be from a tradition preceding Paul, i.e. pre-Pauline tradition. It is important to note however, that although these texts may differ in their wording, they agree with regards to the essence of the Eucharist, i.e. the breaking of the bread, drinking from the cup and doing all of this in remembrance of Him.

For the South African Theologian, John De Gruchy, the sacraments can be seen as “*communal acts of remembering and representing the gospel narrative*” because the Eucharist is a meal that is celebrated by a faith community, thus rendering it a community meal.¹⁰ He continues to say that “*the sacraments rightly understood and practised within the worship life of the Church play a central role in shaping Christian community and its witness to God's reconciliation*”.¹¹ De Gruchy also makes it clear that the manner in which the sacraments are understood and celebrated in the Church is actually a reflection of how healthy the Church is as a community of reconciliation.¹² And this spills over into the communities that we live in. When we celebrate the Eucharist we cannot do it in isolation of where we live because it has social implications. We celebrate the meal and in so doing also give thanks for the gift of God's creation. We also know that God is a just God and therefore we need to seek social justice for all creation. The Dutch ecumenist, Martien Brinkman, is in line with De Gruchy in his description of the Eucharist. For Brinkman the “Eucharist as sacrament of communion is real food for scattered people in their social struggle, to heal the brokenness of human existence”.¹³ He continues to state that “*as mediating signs of reconciliation sacraments are at the same time symbols of protest serving to unmask the life that is not reconciled*”.¹⁴ Brinkman concludes by saying that the sacraments are “*symbolic signs of hope in the midst of the multicoloured experiences which we go*

⁹ See Jeremias, J. 1969. The Words of Institution. In *Understanding the Eucharist*. P. Mc Goldrick (ed.), Gill and MacMillan: Dublin. 1969, 18-20

¹⁰ See De Gruchy, J. 2002. *Reconciliation Restoring Justice*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 2002, 96

¹¹ Ibid., 96

¹² See also Vosloo, Robert. R. 2012. The Welcoming Table? The Lord's Supper, Exclusion, and the Reformed Tradition. In *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth. Essays in Honour of Abraham van de Beek*, (eds.), E. Van der Borgh and P. Van Geest (Leiden/Boston: Brill), 2012, 483. In his opening remarks Vosloo quotes Bram van de Beek who is of the opinion that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated on a more regular basis because it is central in the life of Christians and the church. In some traditions there is only a quarterly celebration and van de Beek is of the opinion that this can never be enough in the celebration of Love. The church order of URCSA stipulates that Holy Communion should be celebrated at least once every quarter.

¹³ See Brinkman. M.E. 1999. *Sacraments of Freedom: Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament – Justification and Freedom*. The Netherlands: Meinema, Zoetermeer. 1999, 85

¹⁴ Ibid., 85

through in daily life".¹⁵ Therefore, in essence, celebrating the Eucharist places a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the faith community.

Michael Welker, a German Protestant Theologian and Professor of Systematic Theology (Dogmatics), clearly pointed out the lack of clarity in terms of the meaning of some phrases in the instituting words, such as "*everyone ought to examine themselves*"¹⁶ and "*those who eat and drink without discerning.... drink judgment on themselves*"¹⁷. This lack of clarity could ultimately result in the misunderstanding of this sacrament, and might even be one of the reasons why the sacrament is no longer understood as a feast of reconciliation and peace. Instead this feast, where people should be accepted unconditionally, has now become an instrument of "*moral gatekeeping*".¹⁸

This automatically excludes some people from celebrating with the rest of the faith community. This "*moral gatekeeping*" has the effect of keeping people, who are in need of healing, reconciliation and peace away from the "*welcoming table*"¹⁹. When we observe those who abstain from partaking in the feast, it immediately becomes a point of discussion amongst some congregants. They wonder what the reasons are that their "*brother or sister in Christ*" has decided to abstain from the sacrament. People who have already tormented themselves for not partaking in the meal are put on the spot once again. Those who are lamenting and feeling far from God are pushed away even further, if that is at all possible, by their reluctance to sit at the "*welcoming table*".

In our tradition, the minister and some selected church council and congregation members are seated at the table in front of the sanctuary. The rest of the congregation is normally served in the pews. There are some other traditions where the bread and wine are served at a communion rail at the front of the sanctuary. People move towards the front of the sanctuary, kneeling at the communion rail. Nancy Eiesland, in the thought-provoking book *The Disabled*

¹⁵ Ibid., 93

¹⁶ See *Holy Bible: New International Version*; 1 Corinthians 11:28

¹⁷ See *Holy Bible: New International Version*; 1 Corinthians 11:29

¹⁸ See Welker, M. 2000. *What happens in Holy Communion?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans. 2000, 70

¹⁹ See Vosloo, The Welcoming Table? The Lord's Supper, Exclusion, and the Reformed Tradition. 2012, 483-501

God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability, makes us aware of the difficulties that some people experience because of their physical disability. People who are disabled (either in a wheel-chair or on crutches) are told that they need not go to the front because they will be served at their seats. She reiterates that even though the congregation tries to make things easier and accommodate everyone, they are in fact creating a lonely space in which the person is denied an opportunity to commune in the true sense²⁰.

For these “excluded few” the Eucharist is being transformed “*from a corporate experience to a solitary one ... from a sacralization of Christ’s broken body to a stigmatization of my disabled body*”.²¹ She tries to explain how people are sometimes prevented and restricted by architectural designs and the way in which rituals are practised. We can sometimes be so set in our ways that we do not even realise that we are making people feel unwelcome at the “welcoming table”.

Elaine Ramshaw, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, also addresses this issue of the “excluded few”, members of the faith community who are excluded from participation in the Eucharist, in her book *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. She refers specifically to young children. Her argument is that “*communion is one’s birthright by baptism, even if delayed*”.²² She strongly believes that an explanation is owed to these children, even in the case where the delay in the communing was done on theological grounds. Other ways need to be obtained on how these children could be reminded of their rightful place within the community. I agree with Ramshaw. During the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, children are mostly excluded and must observe quietly in the pews²³. The communal nature of the Eucharist is tainted through the action of blatant exclusion of our children. Pastoral attention should be given to this issue because there are ways in which children could be part of this celebration.

²⁰ Nancy Eiesland writes from personal experience as she is a woman living with a disability.

²¹ See Eiesland, N. 1994. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Abingdon Press: Nashville. 1994, 112

²² See Ramshaw, E. 1987. *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1987, 40

²³ Only confirmed members of the URC are allowed to participate in the sacrament. See full description in URCSA’s *Church Order* (2010:110-111) for the church’s stance on participation in the Eucharist. I admit that I have attended congregations where bread was served to the children or where children were blessed.

Robert Vosloo, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology (Church History), proposes a creative focus on the "welcoming table", when he describes the *"Lord's Supper as a feast of radical inclusion and hospitality"*²⁴. Vosloo makes it clear that the table is a place of unconditional acceptance: a place of visible unity and a place where people can experience hospitality. It should be remembered that the people who were present at this "welcoming table" were not saints. Welker stresses that the first recipients of Jesus' supper were Judas *"who betrayed Him"*, Peter *"who denied Him"* and the disciples *"who abandoned Him and fled"*.²⁵ So the participants at this supper were by no means an exemplary group. And yet, even though tradition teaches that the Table is reserved for those worthy to approach it, these disciples were not prevented or hindered in participating in the celebration of the meal. They were in fact the ones who received instructions to continue with the tradition and to do it in remembrance of our Lord.

This fellowship of total acceptance, even for those who would desert Him in His hour of need, demonstrates the grace and salvation that we sinners can receive at the table. From this group of people that were present at the table it becomes clear that Jesus breaks the bread, His body, for a broken Church and a broken people. In fact, we see clearly from his life that Jesus shared his Table with a variety of people. Scripture mentions sinners (Mark 2:15; Luke 15:1-2), tax-collectors (Luke 19:5), and a prostitute whom He allowed to attend to Him while He was seated at a table (Luke 7:36-38), even though it created a stir amongst the "righteous". We see that Jesus was welcoming in His table-fellowship.

The theologian, Duncan Forrester, also commented on the behaviour of people during the celebration of the Eucharist. He specifically mentioned what happened in the Indian tradition where the status of a person in society played a big role in their eating and drinking habits. Purity and pollution with regards to eating and drinking habits were very important. Forrester alluded to the fact that *"numerous New Testament scholars"* argued that

Jesus directly confronted and broke through the structures
of purity and pollution which were deeply entrenched in

²⁴ See Vosloo, *The Welcoming Table? The Lord's Supper, Exclusion, and the Reformed Tradition*. 2012, 483

²⁵ See Welker, *What happens in Holy Communion?* 2000, 71

the Israel of his day, particularly in relation to eating and drinking...the amount of attention given to Jesus' eating and drinking in the gospels is quite extraordinary.²⁶

He further explained that Jesus did not just eat with all sorts of people but that Jesus also told narratives about meals in which different conducts were observed. These narratives were "*shocking to those who took seriously the traditional rules of purity and pollution*".²⁷

Jeremias also refers to the difference in the understanding of table-fellowship for Orientals and Westerners. For the Orientals it is "*a guarantee of peace, of truth, of brotherhood. Table-fellowship is fellowship of life. Table-fellowship with Jesus is even more*".²⁸ We must acknowledge that even participants at the table today might not be at all so different. We are also a broken people, seeking to find healing, justice and reconciliation.

The theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer categorically states that Christ is to be found in "*the Word and Sacrament. The preaching of the Church and the administration of the sacraments is the place where Jesus Christ is present*".²⁹ He makes us aware that our communion with God is in fact "*richer and more assured*" than what the disciples had because we have "*communion and presence*" with the glorified Lord who took human nature upon himself and bore our sorrows.³⁰ Our communion with this risen Lord takes place through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Bonhoeffer continues to argue that preaching alone is not sufficient to make us members of Christ's body: the sacraments complete the process because:

baptism incorporates us in the unity of the Body of Christ and the Lord's Supper fosters and sustains our fellowship and communion in that Body.³¹

²⁶ See Forrester, D. 1997. *The True Church and Morality: Reflections on Ecclesiology and Ethics*. WCC Publications: Geneva. 1997, 64

²⁷ Ibid., 64

²⁸ See Jeremias, The Words of Institution. 1969, 22

²⁹ See Bonhoeffer, D. 1959. *The Cost of Discipleship*. SCM Press: London. 1959, 225-226

³⁰ Ibid., 236

³¹ Ibid., 239

While the Table reminds us of the pain and suffering that the Lord had to endure, it will simultaneously alert us, the community of believers, of the pain that we endure in our personal and communal life. It will also bring to the fore the stark realities of every day: violence, rape, racism, child abuse, victimization, corruption, the gap between rich and poor, etc. When celebrating as brothers and sisters, we should never forget the brokenness of our world, but should commit ourselves to making room at the Table for those who feel unworthy to celebrate with us, whom we might inadvertently exclude from this feast.

6.1.2. Views from the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document

The *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document of the World Council of Churches discusses the Eucharist as follows: First, the Eucharist is “a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God” (BEM 2A3). We should therefore see it as a feast, which might seem to preclude someone who is lamenting. The proclamation expects witness about the good God has done and the celebratory aspect would mean communion with others; having a light spirit. A person who is lamenting is hardly likely to be in the mood for either witnessing or communion. There would be too many unanswered questions about their specific issues for them to be in a festive mood.

However Laurence Stookey, a Professor Emeritus of Preaching and Worship at Wesley Theological Seminary, points out that “*sharing food and drink is a universal way of marking significant experiences*”.³² Eating and drinking are integrally part of a large section of our lives³³. Even at a funeral, people end the ceremony with a meal and often the spirits of the mourners are lifted during this time of communion with friends and family. Tears can change instantly into laughter and light conversation while this communion takes place.

³² See Stookey, L.H. 1993. *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon. 1993, 13

³³ See G. Lukken's contribution, “Anthropology of the meal and its rites” - Lukken, G. 1995. New Rites around Communion in Present-Day Western Culture. In *Bread of Heaven: Customs and practices surrounding Holy Communion: Essays in the history of liturgy*. C. Caspers, G. Lukken and G. Rouwhorst (eds.), Den Haag: Kok Pharos Publishing House. 1995, 220-221

Second, remembering what Christ has done for us remains the focus in the celebration of the Eucharist (BEM 2B5-7)³⁴. Claassens explains at length the link between God's provision of food in the Old Testament and how Jesus provided food to the masses in the New Testament, investigating specifically the Gospels of Luke and John for these comparisons.³⁵ In both the Old and the New Testaments God and Jesus were well aware of the physical needs of the people and provided abundantly for these needs. We find solace in these acts of provision when we lament the circumstances that we are wrestling with.

During our process of lament we might be tempted to think that the Lord does not know the depth of our suffering; that God has forgotten about us. The process of remembering what Christ's actions for us and for the world at large, forces us to consider the suffering of our risen Lord. Celebrating the Eucharist recalls the betrayal, the pain, the suffering and death that Jesus experienced. It also reminds us of the people that were involved in this process of betrayal. Through this we are reminded of His broken body and the blood that was shed. For Welker, it is important that the Eucharist should not "*weigh people down, desensitize them, and drive them to apathy, self-doubt, and self-torment...*".³⁶ He is of the opinion that we should fight against this misuse and make sure that the Eucharist is a "*meal of reconciliation, liberation and peace*".³⁷ Welker and De Gruchy³⁸ are both concerned that the Eucharist should not be misunderstood or misused.

At the Table people should find healing for their brokenness; they should find comfort for their tormented souls. In his paper, *The Role of the Eucharist in Human Dignity: A South African Story*³⁹, Cilliers talks about "human dignity between embodying sacrament and disembodying sacrilege", explaining how the "*refused participation*" of some members of the church has "*fragmented*" the body of Christ. This ultimately resulted in the "*fragmentation of the Church and, ultimately, the South African society*".⁴⁰ This "*refused participation*" is in direct

³⁴ See Claassens' thoughts on this issue in Claassens, L.J.M. 2004. *The God Who Provides: Biblical Images of Divine Nourishment*. Nashville, Abingdon Press.

³⁵ See Claassens, *The God Who Provides: Biblical Images of Divine Nourishment*. 2004, 100-104

³⁶ See Welker, *What happens in Holy Communion?* 2000, 103

³⁷ Ibid., 103

³⁸ See De Gruchy, *Reconciliation Restoring Justice*. 2002, 96-108

³⁹ This paper was delivered on 5th November 2012 at Humboldt University, Berlin

⁴⁰ See Cilliers, J. *The Role of the Eucharist in Human Dignity: A South African Story*. Unpublished paper, 13

contradiction with Welker's statement that *"Holy Communion is an event of unconditional acceptance of all the participants"*.⁴¹

We can see clearly how the misinterpretation of the Bible resulted in the sad history of our country, and we might never know the extent of the damage done to the human body and spirit during this time. Like Welker and De Gruchy Cilliers is concerned about the Eucharist being misunderstood and misused. To this end he points out the sad irony of the heresy of apartheid, i.e. colonialists' claim that they brought the "presence of Christ" to South Africa through the celebration of the Eucharist but in effect, they were the same people who fragmented the Church – due to the weakness of some.

Third, *"Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"* indicate that *"the presence of Christ is clearly the centre of the Eucharist, and the promise contained in the words of institution are therefore fundamental to the celebration"* (BEM 2C14). BEM takes cognisance of the fact that the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist means different things to people, depending on their denomination. Regardless of this, BEM states that:

the bond between the Eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive (BEM 2C14).

It is through the Holy Spirit that the words of Jesus are made *"present and alive"*. Claassens reiterates that the Eucharist provides a space where we experience God's presence and where we can trust God, *"the Gracious Provider for our daily bread in every facet of our lives"*.⁴² God is present in all our needs, both the physical and the spiritual and emotional needs. We can find comfort in this promise and know that God is present, even when we are lamenting.

Fourth, *"Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"* views the Eucharist as *"communion of the faithful"* (BEM 2D19-20). The sharing of the bread and the common cup challenges all believers to work towards reconciliation amongst fellow believers. We are challenged to work towards

⁴¹ See Welker, *What happens in Holy Communion?* 2000, 69

⁴² See Claassens, *The God Who Provides: Biblical Images of Divine Nourishment*. 2004, 106

eradication of injustices in our societies, such as the big gap between rich and poor⁴³, sexual abuse, violence, racism⁴⁴ and separation. We are called upon to fight the cause of those who are marginalized. All these issues in our societies are lamentable and should be reclaimed in the pulpit as well. Sally Brown, an Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship, says correctly that the “*Christian hope is anchored in a God who has entered utterly into suffering and grief*”.⁴⁵ She explains that if we want to witness about the “*God of Easter*”, we would require the language of lament to do so.⁴⁶ Preaching on lament allows the preacher as well as the congregation to work through the myriad of emotions which are present when we experience suffering and loss. It makes us realise that we are not alone in our state of lament. We find comfort in the thought that even our Saviour went through a process of lament in His life.

Finally, “*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*” sees the Eucharist as the “*Meal of the Kingdom*” (BEM 2E22). Stookey points out that the whole Church participates in this feast while awaiting “*the perfect reign of God*”.⁴⁷ Those who are seated around the table should be concerned for their brothers and sisters who stay away from this feast because of personal suffering, thereby missing out on the opportunity that the Eucharist affords, namely an opportunity of a middle space where all believers can meet and where reconciliation, healing and justice can take place; a place where they can ask searching questions to God, or even just think differently about the pain and suffering that they are going through; a place where they can be reminded that Jesus also suffered; that he was referred to as “*a man of suffering*” by the prophet Isaiah.⁴⁸

⁴³ See Taljaard, A. 2004. “Die nagmaal as middelruimte tussen ryk en arm gelowiges om sigbaarheid aan versoening in die samelewing te gee” in *NGTT* 45 (2): 2004, 373-379

⁴⁴ In the foreword of *Apartheid is a heresy*, Allan Boesak states categorically that “apartheid was taken from its political framework and placed in the centre of the life of the Church. Dealing with apartheid means dealing with the very heart of the Gospel, namely the Table of the Lord”. Although some might not agree, apartheid originated around the Eucharist table when white Christians of the Dutch Reformed Church in Swellendam refused to share the table with “heathens” – this is how the new black converts were referred to. A decision was made to have separate Eucharist celebrations. This was supposed to be a temporary arrangement but became a law in this church at the synod of 1857. The reason given for this decision was the weakness of some (white) members of the congregation. De Handelingen der Zeven eerste vergaderingen van de Algemene synode der Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk van Zuid-Afrika (Kaapstad: Government drukkers); See also De Gruchy, *Reconciliation Restoring Justice*, 2002, 97-98; See Johan Cilliers, *The Role of the Eucharist in Human Dignity: A South African Story* (Unpublished), 1-13; See also Vosloo, *The Welcoming Table? The Lord’s Supper, Exclusion, and the Reformed Tradition*. 2012, 484-490. See also Forrester, D. 1997. *The True Church and Morality: Reflections on Ecclesiology and Ethics*. WCC Publications: Geneva. 1997, 67-68.

⁴⁵ See Brown, S. 2005. When Lament Shapes the Sermon. In *Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. (eds.), S.A. Brown and P.D. Miller. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2005, 28

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28

⁴⁷ See Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ’s Feast with the Church*. 1993, 26

⁴⁸ See Isaiah 53:3, *New International Version*.

This is also a place and a space where we can think anew about the Kingdom of God, and what it means for us.

6.1.3. The new covenant

“...‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”. This phrase forms part of the instituting words that we referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Jesus spoke of the blood of the covenant when he presented the bread and wine to His disciples during the last supper. Stookey is of the opinion that this reference to the covenant meant much more to his disciples because they were in Judaism and understood the intricacies of a covenant. He explains further that *“a covenant in the biblical sense was a deep relationship, never taken casually”*.⁴⁹ Such a relationship obviously needed to be maintained. The cost of being faithful to the covenant would thus not be cheap but would make demands on anyone who entered it. Entering into a covenant with someone cannot be seen in a casual manner as broken covenants have consequences that might result in death.⁵⁰

Interestingly, Stookey also touches on the fact that the Eucharist, has been seen to a lesser extent, as a *“gift of love from God”*.⁵¹ It was seen mostly as a reward for faithful living, which has caused people on occasion to hesitate in partaking in the sacrament, fearing that they are not worthy. This could apply especially for people who are lamenting and who feel that God has forsaken them. However, Stookey stresses that we cannot earn from God *“an invitation to the Table of the Lord. But what is done there is intended to show us God’s faithful ways of justice and mercy, and what is received there is meant to strengthen us for responsible and faithful service to God”*.⁵² In this covenant we have a relationship with God that involves both grace and responsibility. At the Table where we share in communion with our brothers and sisters and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17

⁵⁰ In Jeremiah 34:8-22 we read about the freedom for the slaves. The Lord reminded His people about the covenant that He had made with the ancestors. Every seventh year, fellow Hebrews who had sold themselves, should be freed. The people obeyed initially but then rescinded and took back the male and female slaves that they had set free initially. The Lord now declares that all those who have violated the covenant will be killed. Also see Hosea 11 where the Lord laments that His people are bent on turning away from Him despite his nurturing covenant love.

⁵¹ Ibid., 18

⁵² Ibid., 19

through the grace of God we receive, comfort and strength, pardon for our sins and renewal for our spirit.

A phrase contained in the instituting opening is “...do this, whenever ..., in remembrance of me”. This act of remembrance is also known as *anamnesis*. It is important to note that *anamnesis* means much more than just the intellectual memory of events. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry refers to the *anamnesis* as “both representation and anticipation...the Church’s effective proclamation of God’s mighty acts and promises” (BEM 2B5). For Welker, “memory not only specifies to a high degree the common past, but also the shared present and the unexpected future”.⁵³ Keshgegian also noted that the “Christian story is remembrance and hope”.⁵⁴

As Christians, we are a faith community that remembers what Jesus has done for us. We live in anticipation of the coming Kingdom. We are hopeful for the *not yet*. However, we need to question whether we “remember enough” the injustices happening in our communities. Do we support those who have been victimized and experience trauma?⁵⁵ Are we patient with those who are lamenting the suffering that they are experiencing? Do we feel any emotion towards the perpetrators besides hate and anger? Are we able to remember differently? With hope? And how do we remember?

In John 14: 26 before Jesus was crucified, he told his disciples that the Holy Spirit will come and comfort us. The Holy Spirit will also teach us everything and remind us what He has taught us. We can therefore not disregard the particular role that the Holy Spirit plays, especially with respect to the Eucharistic *anamnesis*.⁵⁶ We remember what Christ has done for us through the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

⁵³ See Welker, *What happens in Holy Communion?* 2000, 126

⁵⁴ See Keshgegian, F.A. 2000. *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2000, 131

⁵⁵ As I write this, Johan Kotzé, the so-called “Modimolle Monster” has been sentenced to life in prison in the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria. He received a life sentence for (i) the murder of his stepson Conrad Bonette, (ii) a life sentence for the rape of his former wife Ina Bonette, and (iii) 25 years for kidnapping and assault. Kotzé’s three co-accused also received life sentences. Ina Bonette shared with the media how she had been so traumatised by these events that she is now receiving long-term counselling. She was also of the opinion that Kotzé’s sentence was just. See: <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Johan-Kotze-sentenced-to-life-20130717> (Accessed 17 July 2013).

⁵⁶ See Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ’s Feast with the church*. 1993, 100-102

As human beings our memory is always in a transformative state. We tend to try and forget painful events as we focus on positive things in our lives. As our circumstances change, so too does our recollection of events that took place. When Jesus instructed us to remember what He has done for us, we cannot do so selectively. That would defeat the purpose of this command. This is why the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is so important in the Eucharistic anamnesis. The Holy Spirit prevents the memory of Jesus to be just an internal and personal affair but allows for these memories to be proclaimed in the public arena.

The theme of remembrance is also important for Nancy Eiesland. She questions who this God is that we remember in the Eucharist. Is it the perfect, able-bodied God, or the disabled God? She opts for the *“disabled God that is present at the Eucharist table – the God who was physically tortured, arose from the dead, and is present in heaven and on earth, disabled and whole”*.⁵⁷ The crucifixion of Christ is so often romanticized that Eiesland's explanation comes as a shock, reminding us that we really need different voices, different experiences, before we can truly start to understand what the Eucharist means.

Different voices on the understanding of lament, and its purpose – if any, could also be helpful. Brueggemann gives a brief scholarly view on the theme of lament as understood by Westermann. First, he points out that Westermann showed that the lament psalms move from *“plea to praise”*.⁵⁸ During this move a transformation takes place in the attitude of the speaker, as can be observed sometimes in the situation. Second, Westermann also indicated that when a lamentable situation had been resolved it evoked a song of thanksgiving. Third, the praise in which the lament ends is normally quite creative. Fourth, Westermann believed that there should be a life-setting for lament. If this is not the case it is *“difficult to discuss Sitz im Leben in any formal sense”*.⁵⁹ And finally, it would be safe to deduce that in the lament psalms Israel moves from an *“articulation of hurt and anger to submission of them to God and finally relinquishment”*.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. 1994, 107

⁵⁸ See Brueggemann, W. 1986. “The Costly Loss of Lament”, *JSOT* 36. 1986, 57

⁵⁹ Ibid., 58

⁶⁰ Ibid., 58

What is pertinent to the discussion in this chapter is one of the two losses indicated by Brueggemann that could result when lament is no longer observed. Two decades ago already Walter Brueggemann stated that an absence of lament could result in, firstly, the “*loss of genuine covenant interaction because the second party to the covenant (the petitioner) has become voiceless or has a voice that is permitted to speak only praise and doxology*”.⁶¹ Such a relationship would indeed not be honest. He states further that in the absence of lament “*covenant comes into being, only as a celebration of joy and well-being*”.⁶² Secondly it can also result in “*stifling of the question of theodicy*”.⁶³ In the end these losses could have far-reaching consequences for social practices and for the faith community at large.

6.1.4. The Eucharist Theology of Denise Ackermann

Ackermann, a feminist and practical theologian, has been advocating the practise of lament for many years.⁶⁴ Writing from her South African context, Ackermann attempts to promote lament as a healing process in which faith communities can deal with painful memories of suffering and loss. She declares boldly that the sharing of bread and wine with fellow believers is an occasion where “*grace and food for life*” are found.⁶⁵ She confesses herself “*at heart a eucharistic being*”, believing that the struggle against many challenges in her country needs the sustenance found in the sharing of the bread and the wine.⁶⁶

It is important to point out that she has more faith in the effectiveness of the smaller groups within the church to deal more speedily with the pain that people are dealing with, because people are more likely to share their stories in smaller groups. A safe space is provided for such sharing and in the process they are transformed in more ways than one. This thought is in line with my initial comment in chapter 1 where I commented that people seemed to be

⁶¹ Ibid., 60

⁶² Ibid., 60

⁶³ Ibid., 61

⁶⁴ For some thoughts from Ackermann on the understanding of lament, see Ackermann (2001:32), Ackermann (1998:132-150), Ackermann (1996:48).

⁶⁵ See Ackermann, D.M. 1998. A voice was heard in Ramah: A Feminist Theology of Praxis for healing in South Africa. In Ackermann, D.M. and Bons-Storm, R. (eds.), *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*. Leuven: Peeters. 1998, 94

⁶⁶ Ibid., 94

more at ease on a Wednesday evening prayer meeting to “give themselves permission” to break down in tears during the prayer sessions. These prayer meetings are usually attended by a faithful few, and over time, these people start to develop a comfortable relationship with each other.

Ackermann is aware that the required transformation in the institutional church might not happen speedily; yet people need to deal with their pain now, rather than wait for the culmination of its process of transformation. This is also in line with my thoughts about the lack of sensitivity that is experienced sometimes during a Sunday morning service, when people break down in tears because of the emotional turmoil that they are experiencing. There would be an uncomfortable silence after this breakdown and normally the liturgist or minister would continue with the service as if nothing unusual had happened. This would suggest that as religious leaders, we are mostly at a loss of how to deal with lament in a public space.

I had not been aware of “the Eucharist theology of Ackermann” (to use the sub-title in an article by Melissa Marley)⁶⁷ and I certainly did not expect her theology to reflect my own experience in my search for finding healing and hope in situations that appear to be hopeless. During the incubation process of this research, it struck me how many people did not really think that lament could be of any use to us in our personal and communal journeys of healing, reconciliation and hope.

For Ackermann the “*shared lament needs to be cemented promptly in the cup as a further affirmation that the healing is happening*”.⁶⁸ This in fact challenges our church discipline. People refrain from partaking in the communion for various reasons. Those who are mourning and addressing God directly about their hardships might feel unworthy under self-examination to share the common meal because calling God to account in many instances is not done. This act of not sharing the meal with the faith community denies people a healing process which is so needed in our society. We need to share the meal so that we can experience the

⁶⁷ See M. Marley, 2009. The Boldest Meal: A Reflection on the Eucharist Theology of Denise Ackermann. In Pillay, M., Nadar, S. and Le Bruyns, C. (eds) Ragbag Theologies: Essays in honour of Denise M Ackermann: A feminist theologian of praxis.. Stellenbosch: SUNPRESS.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 98

transformative power of God at work; so that our brokenness and our hopelessness can be turned into healing and hope. This is what the Eucharist theology of Ackermann is all about: a place where brokenness and despair can be realized into hope, healing and reconciliation through the vehicle of lament.

6.2. Conclusion

During the Eucharist, members of the faith community exercise their liturgical remembrance and experience what God has offered through Jesus Christ. We need to realise and understand that, in essence, the focus of the Eucharist is Jesus Christ. Our witness, on that occasion, is in the form of our communion with each other and through the meal. The meal then should remind us of what Christ has done for us in the past. It also provides us with a space to have communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In many congregations the bread that is used during the sacrament is baked by members of the congregation, an act which adds to the symbolic nature of the unity that we should experience in this sacrament. People are part of the sacrament in a personal way and might understand the richness of sacraments as they are drawn to the table. The unity is further demonstrated through this act of freshly baked bread and Ramshaw sums it up as follows: *"We who are many are one, for we eat of the one loaf"*.⁶⁹

As a community of believers, we are also challenged with social and political issues on a daily basis. We celebrate the meal, anticipating the "not yet"; the Kingdom of God. The new reign of God promises that things will be different; things will be better. However, while we are waiting on this "new tomorrow" we need to acknowledge that we are living in a broken world – an unjust world, in most cases. So this eschatological view of the Eucharist needs to be closely linked to the justice theme.⁷⁰ We need to have a social consciousness while we are seated at the table.

For William Crockett, *"a meal celebrated in prospect of the coming reign of God must give rise to a new social vision grounded in the promise of the kingdom. Such a vision challenges the status quo in*

⁶⁹ See Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. 1987, 39

⁷⁰ See Crockett, W. 1989. *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation*. Pueblo Publishing Company: New York. 1989, 256-261

society and the prevailing set of economic and social relationships".⁷¹ Being a faith community does not preclude pertinent questions. When we have this "*new social vision*" to which Crockett alludes we must also be critical about the society that we live in. In the South African society there are so many things of which to be critical. I am of the opinion that the wave of violence that our country is experiencing is too much to bear. Families are torn apart almost every day by the abuse, the rape and the killings. The bodies of women and children are violated in the most gruesome manner possible. How can we not judge ourselves as a society under these circumstances? How can we not judge ourselves when we live in such an unjust society? I am therefore in total agreement with Crockett when he points out that "*the community gathered around the table of the Lord must be prepared to have its entire common life in the world placed under both judgment and grace*".⁷²

When facing so many social ills it becomes easy to forget about the injustices that we are faced with in the church. In "*The Disabled God*" Nancy Eiesland provided a glimpse into the lives of the disabled persons and what their experiences are in the community of believers. It challenges the way that we do things in the church. She had to deal with the exclusive practices of the church. In our tradition I am of the opinion that the celebration at the table can sometimes lack intimacy simply because of the size of the congregation. I am sure that many people will have different experiences at the table, not all necessarily positive. We are challenged to look anew at our everyday worship and acknowledge where we have exclusive practices. And after acknowledging these, we need to think of ways that we can incorporate change.

At the Table we remember what the Lord has done for us and we acknowledge the absolute sacrifice that was made at Calvary. Jesus' whole life was a life of sacrifice so that we may have communion with God. Jesus gave of himself, freely. This element of sacrifice should still be present today, when we celebrate the Eucharist. That mystery of the love that God has for us is still present today.

⁷¹ Ibid., 256

⁷² Ibid., 256

As mentioned earlier, there are only a few texts which mention the instituting words of the Eucharist explicitly. However, through these texts the themes of eschatology and justice as well as the themes of justice and sacrifice are shown to be intimately related. Clear teaching is needed on these themes and others, to show how the celebration of the Eucharist can aid in transformation in our church and in our societies as a whole. It would most probably be more beneficial to have these teachings as part of the Sunday morning sermons. It could be most effective to refer briefly to the Eucharist while addressing other themes. History has shown all too well that the traditional strategies with regards to education in the congregation have not been always successful. Only a few people would attend when specific issues are addressed through a traditional workshop.

The inclusion of brief references to the Eucharist during sermons will make it clear that this sacrament of our church actually reveals Christ who is Lord of all areas of our church and our lives. Stookey gives practical examples in this regard.⁷³ He mentions that when preaching on stewardship a brief reference could be made to the example of sharing that we experience at the Table. A sermon on the nature of the church could briefly explore the fellowship and communion we experience in the presence of God, while a sermon about prayer can be used to show that through prayer we ask of God but we also praise Him – as we do whenever we offer the Eucharistic prayer. It is important to note from the beginning that there is no quick fix with respect to the reorientation of the understanding of the Eucharist through teaching and preaching. It is a long process and it will demand patience from those involved. It will also be good to make sure that children are included in this process so that they can start to grapple with these issues from an early age.

If a Eucharistic orientation comes about through teaching and preaching it also asks of us to reflect on how the Eucharist is observed. A new understanding of the Eucharist does not necessarily mean “out with the old and in with the new”. However, we would need to combine our newfound understanding and the manner in which we conduct our services. I am by no means advocating a complete re-draft of the observation of celebrating the

⁷³ See Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the church*. 1993, 109

Eucharist. Rather I am suggesting that we could incorporate elements that could further explain that we approach the Table in all our brokenness and that we are “*allowed*” to lament, even at this table of celebration. Lament and celebration could thus be seen as two sides of the same coin. See Addendum B and Addendum C for a more detailed explanation of how elements were introduced to be part of the celebration at the Table at a particular service, during the field research.

We acknowledge that the Eucharist is in essence a feast, but we cannot get away from the fact that there are lamentable issues in our communities. We cannot close our eyes to the need for social change and social justice in our societies. As a community of believers we need to have a prophetic voice for the voiceless. We need to be the change agents. People are tired of the daily struggles that they are facing. So as we celebrate the Eucharist and remember what the Lord has done for us, we should re-awaken the hope for a new and better tomorrow. Ackermann sums it up as follows:

living one’s hope for a better world means realistically acknowledging brokenness and need while at the same time engaging with life in such a way that deeds express that which one hopes for... We have to make our hopes happen.⁷⁴

We should learn anew how to dream of a better tomorrow; how to hope again! We should re-orientate ourselves so that hoping can become a habit in our daily lives.

In conclusion, the celebration of the Eucharist could be seen as a dangerous sacrament in some respects - dangerous in the sense that it cannot be celebrated without having the responsibility of dealing with the issues such as exclusion and social injustice at hand. Celebration of the Eucharist requires from each one of us to live a theology of praxis.⁷⁵ It also passes on an

⁷⁴ See Ackermann, D.M. A voice was heard in Ramah: A Feminist Theology of Praxis for healing in South Africa. 1998, 89

⁷⁵ See chapter 3 in Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987:99-100) that addresses the issue of the symbolism of the Eucharist for justice. She explains how Jesus always associated with the marginalised and how this was completely unacceptable according to the social and religious standards of the day. Jesus’s behaviour broke down barriers between rich and poor, male and female, etc. Those who had an encounter with Jesus were changed radically. After being healed or touched by Jesus, people were usually told not to sin anymore and this encouraged them to change their lives for the better.

identification with the church and we need to bear witness to this identification. Through the Eucharist the church is exhorted and this places a great burden on the “*body of Christ*” to embody Jesus in our midst.

Chapter 7 will deal with the concluding remarks of this research. Practical guidelines for the creation of lament rituals will be provided. The researcher will also provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 7

Concluding Remarks

7.1. Introduction

The research question in this study proposed that the re-discovery or the re-claiming of lament in the liturgy, against the background of healing and hope, could assume a new meaning in our congregations. In order to investigate this proposition the researcher had to establish to what extent lament was part of the liturgy of URCSA. In this chapter, the researcher will provide:

- a summery of the chapters
- concluding remarks with regards to the research that has been done
- practical examples for consideration
- guidelines for creating lament rituals
- recommendations for future research as well as
- practical considerations.

7.2. Summary of chapters

In chapter 1, the reader was introduced to the research topic, namely *Lament in Liturgy: A reflection from an URCSA perspective*. The researcher gave a brief introduction into her personal experience regarding lament in liturgy in her church.¹ The researcher was of the opinion that if lament could be revisited and re-incorporated, in a practical manner, into the liturgy of the church it could be beneficial to the congregants.

The research question and hypothesis were also formulated in this section. The research question was formalised as follows:

Given the challenging times that we live in, in what way could a re-discovery or a re-claiming of lament in liturgy, against the

¹ See Background of the Research in chapter 1 for a full discussion with regards to this personal experience.

background of healing and hope, obtain a new meaning in our congregations?

The idea behind the above statement was that as a faith community, and the community at large, we experience traumatic events in our daily lives. When we gather in church as a faith community we need to share this hurt with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to find in the church a safe space to be able to share all this hurt. And we also need to be afforded the time to lament about these issues. We cannot continue, Sunday after Sunday, as if we are living in a perfect world. We are a broken people and we need to reveal this brokenness in order to launch the healing process. Sadly, we have become a people who do not lament anymore. This is in stark contrast to our faith ancestors for whom lament was part of their being, of their everyday lives.

The idea was not to just lament and not move forward in our healing process. Therefore the phrase “against the background of healing and hope” is important. We need to understand that there is a time for lament, a time for voicing our anger and pain to God. But there is also a time that we need to move towards healing and hope. However, it is by no means an easy process, especially if you are the one lamenting.

The hypothesis alluded to the fact that if the church wants to be relevant in the lives of her congregants, the revisiting and reclaiming of lament cannot be ignored. It was further suggested that a rethinking and reintroduction of lament could have far-reaching consequences, especially where the healing of memories is concerned. This suggested that the concept of lament is not completely unknown to the faith community, but that it has been shelved because, as a church, we believe that we are children of God, children of a King; and therefore we should get only the best. This is in stark contrast to the servanthood example that our Lord and Saviour gave us while walking this earth. However, this does not mean that we cannot live a good life. Rather, it means that we cannot ignore basic aspects of lives of faith; realities in life that ultimately serve in a growing process in the relationship with our Lord.

The different phases that could be experienced during the process of lament² were also discussed. Praise is the normal result after this phase of lament, but this is not true for all instances.³ An important remark was that although we are not strangers to lament, we seem to have lost the ability to verbalise our pain and suffering to God. We seem to be comfortable to do this only when we are praying.

It was stressed that the process of lament cannot be seen in isolation from the process of healing and hope. As Christians we know that we are living in a reality that is far from perfect. However, we are aware that this is not the end – that we are hopeful for the *new tomorrow*, the *not yet*.

The researcher also alluded to the fact that the Holy Communion could possibly act as a catalyst in addressing the decline and/or exclusion of lament in liturgy. However, the practical challenges around celebration of this feast on a more regular basis were also mentioned. The Holy Communion was discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

The demarcation, research method and design as well as data collecting techniques were also discussed.

Chapter 2 provided a platform for the analysis of the data. This chapter is a continuation of the descriptive-empirical task. The information provided a good indication of how the participating congregations experienced lament in their existing liturgies.

In chapter 3 reference was made to the different genres in the Arts that could assist us in verbalising our lament. Through different mediums, artists are able to lament the state of affairs in their countries. This was a clear indication that lament is not just present in the Bible but can be observed in many other forms, such as poems and songs. The chapter concluded by making us aware that even though we are living in modern times, we also have the need to lament the injustice in our lives and in our country.

² Refer to the discussion of lament under 1.2.1

³ Psalm 88 is a classic lament Psalm that does not end in praise.

In chapter 4 the focus was on the exegesis of selected Scripture portions in which lament was present. The texts that were scrutinised included Psalm 13, Psalm 88, Matthew 2:16-18 and Mark 15:34.

Chapter 5 explored the theological constructions of lament. These constructions included laughter and lament, lament and liturgy, lament and transformation, lament and God-images, lament and liminality, lament and hope, lament and healing as well as lament and anthropology/humanity. Each one of these constructions brought another dimension of lament to the table, forcing us to rethink issues that we might have thought were simple and obvious. It also enabled us to become aware that these constructions and lament are part of the same coin. Although this may seem incongruous, the realization dawned that lament could actually be the change agent when dealing with processes such as transformation and healing.

The supporting and healing role that the Holy Communion could play in the process of lament was explored in chapter 6. We were reminded that the Holy Communion is a gift from God and is celebrated amongst the community of faith. Through the celebration of this feast we partake in a communal act of remembering. This sacrament should be a catalyst for reconciliation in our faith communities. In this section we were also made aware of how this “welcoming table” could sometimes make people feel unwelcome and unworthy because the hospitality that we need to show at the table is sometimes lacking.

We were reminded that the disciples, the first ones to sit at this table, were not perfect people, and yet they were tasked to continue with the tradition and to do this act, the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, in remembrance of Jesus Christ. We were reminded that Jesus Christ is the focus of the Holy Communion. Celebrating the meal with our brothers and sisters in Christ should serve as a reminder of what Christ had done for us, but simultaneously a reminder of the new tomorrow that we are anticipating. While we await this new tomorrow we must work together to eradicate the injustices that we are facing. We must dream a new social vision for our communities and work together to realise it. We need to challenge the

ways we have always done things. Through challenging these ancient ways, we might realize that we need to do things differently so that we do not lose people in the process.

We were reminded that we cannot celebrate the Eucharist and ignore the responsibilities that go with it. These include issues of exclusion, social injustice, and stigmatization and others. We are required to live a theology of praxis in our lives. It requires of us to bear witness to the identification that the Eucharist places on the church at large. We are required to embody Christ in all facets of our lives.

In chapter 7 the concluding remarks will be looked at. This chapter will also provide practical liturgical examples that could be considered as well as guidelines for creating lament rituals. Recommendations for future research will also be addressed.

7.3. Outcome of the research

Even though only a few congregations took part in this research, the outcome was in line with the initial thoughts of the researcher, namely that people seldom have the opportunity to lament in liturgy. In most cases, elements of lament are present in a prayer, but very seldom is there a ritual of which the sole purpose is to allow people to lament in the safe space in the church.

Participants were invited to give their opinions regarding the occasional inclusion of lament in the existing liturgies. 92% thought it would be helpful if we included lament sometimes. Regarding the question whether the inclusion of practical elements of lament in liturgy could have a positive influence in our congregations, 96% answered yes, confirmed by their additional comments although some thought that the process needs to be evaluated carefully to make sure that we accomplish what we set out to do.

The ministers that the researcher interviewed felt that the change to embrace lament should start with the religious leaders. They are the people who are guiding their congregants and if

they are hesitant to lament then this is the message that they will send to the congregants as well.

The analysis of the data indicated clearly that people learnt about lament during sermons they heard. Therefore the research clearly supports the hypothesis.

7.4. Practical examples for consideration

Throughout this thesis, the researcher has alluded to the fact that she would like to make congregants aware of how elements of lament could be incorporated into their worship services. It does not make any sense to continue with the worship service in a normal way on a Sunday morning when a tragedy has befallen on the community or a family during the week. We cannot just continue with our conventional way of praise and worship when our brothers and sisters are bleeding.

We need to consider the fact that rituals can offer healing and encourage a recuperative process through the stages of grief or trauma that might befall a community.⁴ During such time of grief, the intimacy experienced by all who have been touched by the trauma can be used to support images of healing, forgiveness and hope. During rituals of lament, it should be made clear that the status quo cannot be observed because circumstances are not normal. Circumstances are changed owing to a traumatic event that the community experienced. It is important that as a faith community we are present, together, in our pain and that we are inviting the healing power of a ritual in our midst.

In the poem *Making Liturgy*, Ruth Burgess explains that through liturgy we are in sharing mode, regardless of who we are, since we set aside a time and space to allow us to express our deepest feelings. This poem gives examples of the many little things that can be done to give voice to what we are feeling.

⁴ For an extensive discussion on how healing can be triggered through remembering, see Sarah York's work in *Remembering well: Rituals for celebrating life and mourning death* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

Making Liturgy

When we get together to make liturgy

we share things,

no hierarchies,

We are wordsmiths and story-tellers

sculptors of images

explorers of silences

music makers

singers of songs.

We move chairs

create sacred spaces in living rooms

set off fireworks in back gardens

dance in cathedrals

picnic in rain-threatening weather

float candles in baptismal fonts.

When we get together to make liturgy

we rejoice with the saints and the angels,

discovering our creativity,

being ourselves

in the image and glory of God.

*Ruth Burgess*⁵

For Anderson, we could find healing grace in a simple act such as “*coffee with a friend or prayer with a trusted spiritual companion*” or we could find it in something as “*complex as the Eucharist or a funeral liturgy*”.⁶ He describes a ritual as “*an interpretive act through which we express and create meaning in our lives*”.⁷ We have rituals that are unique to our families and cultures and

⁵ This poem is recorded in *Making Liturgy: Creating Rituals for Worship and Life* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001: viii), edited by Dorothea McEwan, Pat Pinsent, Ianthe Pratt and Veronica Seddon. The authors of this book provide various ways in which liturgies can be constructed for big and small groups. They provide guidelines for the construction of liturgies that can be adapted for one's specific needs.

⁶ See Anderson, H, 2010. “How rituals heals” in *Word & World* 30, (1), 2010, 41. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCHOST (Accessed 15 June 2010).

⁷ Ibid., 41

that allow us to put our lives in a particular framework of celebrating our success and healing the hurt that we might be experiencing. For Anderson, an effective ritual needs to be “*carefully planned, scrupulously honest, and particular to the moment*”.⁸ This ties in with the brutal honesty that is needed when we are lamenting, and which is a prerequisite to any kind of ritual that we are thinking of doing. Ramshaw identifies three kinds of ritual dishonesty that could threaten the credibility of the process. These are:

- i) Rituals making statements about the participants which are in fact not true;
- ii) Instances when the minister attributes feelings to the congregation in order for the prayer to come across as more personal and relevant;
- iii) The manipulation of people to be part of a ritual when they are clearly not ready to do so.⁹

It is important to note that if we are not honest in our rituals, the healing process might never be experienced or at best, there will be a delay in the healing process.

When we think of a ritual, it is easy to envisage a well-established longstanding way in which things are done. This is the first presumption that Anderson and Foley want to dismantle in their bid to teach us to create new rituals. For them the presumption that “*tradition and repetition are essential for any authentic definition of ritual*” basically stresses that “*a true ritual has a very long history, requires periodic reiteration, and has a certain invariability about it*”.¹⁰ However, we have experienced many changes in our world and in some instances there seems to be a ritual gap in many situations and we are unable to find a ritual framework for our needs. In such cases, we need to create new rituals; to ritualize a situation in order to give people a chance to start with the healing process.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 41

⁹ See chapter 1 of Elaine Ramshaw’s *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) for a more detailed discussion on the need for ritual honesty.

¹⁰ See Anderson, H. & Foley, E. 1998. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1998, 128

¹¹ Anderson and Foley discuss the issue of planning and creating new rituals extensively in chapter 7 of “*Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*”, 125-148. Also see Sarah York’s interesting and necessary thoughts on rituals and how we could celebrate life and mourn death in “*Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death*”, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

Anderson and Foley also provide some useful principles that we need to keep in mind when creating new rituals. It is also important, if possible, to allow those affected to be part of the ritual creation, thereby allowing them to feel part of the process and not as if they are sidelined. The principles are:

- *“Respect the chronological priority of the human story in the shaping of the ritual – do not rush with the story-telling but allow the whole story to be heard.*
- *Allow a significant role for nonverbal symbols in this ritualizing – be geared for times when the use of words will be inadequate and symbolic movements are the only other option.*
- *Resist the compulsion to explain such action – in these times when words are not enough do not try and explain what is happening. Be sensitive to the moment and allow the participants to drink in this myriad of mixed emotions.*
- *Attend to the particularity of the moment.*
- *Beware of overcomplicating the ritual – a single act during a ritual, like a blessing or burning a candle, might be far more effective than a whole array of rituals”.*¹²

The question, however, remains: how can we change our Sunday morning service to accommodate this hurt and pain that we are experiencing? How do we do it in a practical manner?

John Witvliet, in his article *A time to weep: Liturgical lament in times of crisis* asks exactly the same kind of questions, and suggests that we use the biblical psalms as model for change in our worship services.¹³ He is of the opinion that when we do not know how to express ourselves in situations of lament, we should rather rely on the *“reliable and profound laments of the Hebrew Scriptures”*.¹⁴ It would be to our advantage to use the structure of lament that we find in the psalms. An example could look as follow:

- Start with a prayer, that *“even in times of crisis, we approach a personal and accessible God”*

¹² See Anderson & Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*. 1998, 130

¹³ See Witvliet, J. 1997. “A time to weep: Liturgical lament in times of crisis”, 1-8

<http://reformedworship.org/article/june-1997/time-weep-liturgical-lament-times-crisis> (Accessed 05 November 2013).

¹⁴ Ibid., 1

- Then address this God through the images that we have come to know Him by (rock, fortress, etc.)
- Continue with bold lament – *“bring the intense theological questions right into the sanctuary”*. By doing this we follow the direct discourse used in prayers of lament.
- *“Continue in prayer with specific petition: heal us, save us...”*
- *“End the prayer with expressions of hope, confidence and trust, however muted they might be by the present situation”*.¹⁵

Witvliet also provides a direct strategy that could be applied when psalms are used as prayers. A psalm of lament, that would fit the occasion, could be taken (*“Psalm 69 for a crisis of shame, 51 for a crisis of guilt, 38 or 41 for medical crises, 88 for times of utter despair, 77 for the afflictions of old age and 143 for occasions of oppression”*).¹⁶ Use your imagination and transform these psalms to reflect the context that you find yourselves in. Should one choose simply to pray the psalm, additions could be made to the psalm for specific applications. Witvliet used Psalm 13¹⁷, the same Psalm that was used during the empirical study, to show how the text was changed to address a case of domestic abuse:

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
 How long will you hide your face from me?
 How long must I bear pain in my soul,
 and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
 How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

Lord, our Lord,
 we feel forgotten.
 This abuse rips apart our faith.
 The victim, our sister____, is alone in despair.
 How long must this persist?

¹⁵ Ibid., 2

¹⁶ Ibid., 3

¹⁷ Ibid., 3-4

*Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.*

The perpetrator of this abuse is winning!
Please, Lord, stop him!
We cannot bear to see this fool –
the enemy of our sister, and of us –
believe he is successful.

*But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD
because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

We long to sing praise,
to have our sister begin to sense your goodness again.
For deep down, we trust in your goodness. Amen.

This example shows clearly how a psalm can be changed to speak directly into a situation so that those who are affected can find comfort in an ancient prayer, today. Lamenting takes time. It would not be right to go through such a reading of a psalm in a hasty manner. Similarly we also need to understand that we won't be lamenting every Sunday for the whole service. Our faith demands that we move on to praise, because our trust is in God. Witvliet suggests that we could pray different psalms in a creative manner to encompass the journey from lament to praise. If Psalm 13 is read at the heart of the crisis, then perhaps sometime later Psalm 30 could be prayed and finally Psalm 146. It is important to recall that Psalm 13 was prayed at the start of the crisis. Alternatively, these psalms could be used in liturgical

preaching where the stages of disorientation, reorientation, lament and praise are shown clearly.¹⁸

It is important to point out that Witvliet's ideas are only suggestions. Each minister would have to give particular attention to the context of their congregation and the specific challenges that they are facing.

7.5. Guidelines for creating lament rituals

Ministers are ideally closely in tune with what is happening in the congregants' lives. In most cases the heartache will be shared during pastoral counselling or house visits. As theology students we were told to hold the Bible in the one hand and the newspaper in the other; the implication is that we need to be sensitive to what happens in our congregants' lives, whether as a result of the political changes or even socio-economic circumstances in the country. Such issues affect people's lives and some results may be lamentable. At such times ministers need to be alert to ritual possibilities. Such rituals however need to be approached with perceptiveness, and with the permission of those affected. We need to be able to ascertain which rituals of lament are appropriate for the congregation and which need only a few people to be present.

When a traumatic event takes place, we as church should be at the forefront to provide a safe space of refuge in which to lament. It is at times like these that we should:

- i) *Be in tune with what is happening in our community.* Congregants are part of their social community and likewise, the minister, who needs to be present in the everyday lives of the people. Through the media a minister can be updated on the latest happenings in the community as well as the country at large and consider how this influences the congregants;
- ii) *When creating the lament ritual, emphasise one issue.* This will allow for the ritual to be simple but effective; too many issues might evoke an emotional wave leaving people more despondent by the end of the process. If lament is done more often as a ritual, it

¹⁸ Ibid., 4-5

should provide ample time for an array of issues to be dealt with. Be relevant and address the issues which are foremost in the minds of the people. If a gruesome violent attack took place, it would not be appropriate to lament about the lack of job creation. People need to address the issues that are having an impact on their lives at that moment.

- iii) *Inform the congregation that a lament ritual will be included in the Sunday liturgy, and specify which issue the congregation will be lamenting. This will prepare the congregants for a new element in the liturgy and stimulate discussion amongst congregants about the value of lament, and whether it is really necessary to provide time in church for this ritual.*
- iv) Make use of creative people in your church to assist with the liturgy¹⁹. However, keep the process simple and do not clutter with too many elements. If people are bombarded with too many symbols they might be inclined to try and figure out what each one means instead of being part of the ritual as a whole. People will also have to deal with many emotions that might be triggered by the ritual, and emotional overload might defeat the purpose.
- v) In order to involve people actively in the ritual, get their *consent beforehand and also involve* them in the planning of the ritual. It can be dangerous to spring ritual participation on people if they were under the impression that it would be an ordinary worship service. The sudden public exposure might force people to be unfaithful in what they are really experiencing by manipulating their actions and statements. This would basically be ritual dishonesty.
- vi) *Allow the lament ritual to flow naturally with the rest of the Sunday morning liturgy.* People need to realize that lamenting is another way of talking to God, verbalising the pain and anger that we are experiencing. Do not let the lament seem “*out of place*” so that the congregants have more questions at the end of the service. People need to experience lament as part of the rituals in our church.

¹⁹ I agree with Elaine Ramshaw’s view on the role of the pastor in the church where liturgy and ritual is concerned. She sees the pastor as someone who does not take over the work of the people but rather as someone who moves them gently in the right direction so that they can do their work. A pastor should not be the one to create a liturgy or ritual single-handedly but should rather assist congregants in this creative task by using existing knowledge of the tradition of the church as well as the ritual needs of the people. See Chapter 1 of Elaine Ramshaw’s *Ritual and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

- vii) *Do not rush through the process.* Give people a chance to tap into the moment. Some congregations have their catechism classes after the Sunday morning service and they tend to be pressed for time. Identify the most appropriate time for the congregation to include a lament ritual in the liturgy. A Sunday morning service might not work for all, but it will definitely target most people who are participating actively in the activities of the congregation. There is usually a smaller group in attendance on a Wednesday evening during the prayer meetings. However, if it suits the specific congregation to start off with a lament ritual during a Wednesday evening prayer meeting, then so be it. What is important is that the ritual of lament will be included in the liturgical life of the congregation.
- viii) *Make use of the church calendar.* During Lent focus can be placed on our sinful nature as human beings. We can lament how this sinful nature inevitably creates division and fuels conflict amongst us.²⁰ Good Friday also have suggestive possibilities for lament. It is a day that we want to be sad but we do not quite know why. Because this is a day that our Lord transformed death in its totality.

Hamman reiterates that religious leaders “*have the pastoral authority to ‘use’ the experiences of worship to facilitate the work of mourning*” in our respective faith communities. Through this leaders are “*being responsible with the opportunities God provides to facilitate and transform the life*” of our congregations.²¹ Religious leaders thus have the opportunity to see which day on the church calendar affords them the opportunity to include lament in the liturgy.

7.6. Recommendations for future research

- Given the fact that the Cape Synod consists of 319 congregations and 29 presbyteries, it would be beneficial to do research in more congregations, over a wider area. This would obviously take a few years to complete given the fact that these congregations would have to be visited on a regular basis to observe their use of lament in their existing liturgies.

²⁰ See Hamman, J.J. 2005. *When Steeples Cry: Leading congregations through loss and change*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 2005, 147

²¹ Ibid., 147

- It would also be beneficial to do the research in the other synods because we tend to have different styles of worship. When visiting various congregations within one synod, one can easily pick up on the different styles of praise and worship. Even though the prescribed liturgies for our church are used in most instances, there will be areas in the liturgy that would be unique to the specific church. Also, we have different cultures in our church, which we can expect to experience in the various cultural settings. A distinct difference is the style of singing amongst the different cultures.

7.7. Practical considerations

- Religious leaders need to be open to the practice of lament in liturgy. The minister or liturgist would most probably know what would be the best way of introducing elements of lament into the service because they are familiar with the setup.
- Each congregation is unique in the way they worship.
- Although elements of lament were included at a Holy Communion service during the research, this is not the only way in which one could focus on lament in our liturgies. Other services could also be used for this purpose.
- People should not be bombarded with this new process. Rather, it should be a gradual integration to an existing liturgy, if possible, thereby allowing congregants to grow with the new process. They might be able to receive it better if they are not too overwhelmed with too many new things at once.

7.8. Summarizing conclusions

The aims and objectives of the research were the following:

- To encourage people to discuss the issue of lament in liturgy in our church;
- To encourage church leaders to be open to include a process of lament in the liturgy;
- To encourage congregations to be part of this process and to work on symbolism that could be used concretely in their liturgies – symbols or elements that would enable the congregation to lament, to experience healing and to be hopeful for the future;
- To encourage our congregations to have “new” dreams for their communities – to see a better future for us and for our children;

- To give our congregations the opportunity to develop a language of lament which will enable us to voice our suffering, whether communally or individually;
- To enable the researcher to design workshops where congregations could be assisted in the process of lament;
- To publish articles arising from this research.

During the fieldwork, the researcher had the opportunity to talk to people informally about the concept of lament in liturgy. Those who entered into conversation were optimistic about the research and the specific theme. However, it is unknown whether these conversations continued after the researcher had left. The researcher would have to return to these congregations and question people regarding this aspect.

The ministers admitted that lament was not always at the forefront in their respective liturgies, leaving it to feature only in prayer and at funerals. Observing elements of lament in an ordinary worship service is not common. In order for this practise to change, the religious leaders should rethink and re-address the issue of lament in liturgy. Unless they are convinced that it could be beneficial to their congregations it might never be incorporated in the existing liturgies of the church. We need to be sensitive to the fact that the recurring elements that we experience in our weekly liturgies are by no means negative. Human beings respond, mostly positively, to that which is familiar and struggle to adapt to change in particular areas of their lives. These recurring elements in the worship service provide much needed comfort.

The creative members of the congregation could be approached to assist with the creation of liturgies and elements that could be used in the process. On the Sundays when the researcher preached, elements such as salty water, honey, burning candles and the consecration of participants were used. However, these were just examples of what could happen but the process need not be so elaborate. The elements and symbols used for a particular lamentable issue should be appropriate for teaching people that through this process of verbalising their pain they can free themselves for healing. The use of specific elements and symbols should also be considered carefully because elements and symbols might have different meaning for

different people. The explanation for the use of these specific elements and symbols, for a particular situation, should be made very clear to the congregation.

Congregants do have a language of lament, albeit it not used too often. People lament when they pray, and there is nothing negative about this. However, not many people feel comfortable to lament in public, preferring to restrict their lamenting to private moments. However, there are times when we need to lament as a faith community, i.e. publicly! For these times we need to verbalise our pain and suffering to the Lord, in whichever way seems appropriate. We need to remember that the psalms were in fact prayers and poems that were set to music and sung by a worshipper. Like our modern day hymn books, the psalms are material that we use during worship.

As mentioned earlier, each congregation has a unique way in which they worship.²² The fact that the psalms were sung at different devotional moments in the life of Israel indicates how accessible they are to us in these modern times. When we hear Westermann say that lamentation in the Old Testament “*is a phenomenon characterized by three determinant elements: the one who laments, God, and the others*”,²³ we admit that in the process of lament we are not dealing just with the expressions of an individual in emotional stress, but with an event which has the above determinant elements from the beginning.

Upon completion of this research, the researcher would like to design workshops that will give guidance on how to incorporate elements of lament into our liturgies. In conjunction with this process, the researcher plans to publish articles on this topic in order to disseminate the research to a wider audience and to be beneficial for the church. When all has been said and done, we need to understand that the aim in our liturgies should always be for the glory of God. We should not only strive to create the “right” atmosphere in church for what we want to do but we need to realise that a certain amount of unexplained mystery is necessary so that

²² See Bratcher, D. 2011. Patterns for life: structure, genre and theology in Psalms. The voice: Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing. Christians. 2011, 2. See: <http://www.crivoice.org/pdf/psalmgenre.pdf>. (Accessed on 5 November 2013).

²³ See Westermann, C. 1981. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. T. KR Crim and RN Soulen. Edinburg: T.T Clark. 1981, 169

we keep cognisance of the fact that the Holy Spirit plays a vital part in our communion as faith community.

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Appendices

9.1. Addendum A – Liturgy in Afrikaans

Verwelkoming en Afkondigings: Skriba

Votum en Seëngroet: Rev XXX

Navorser lei diens verder

- Uitnodiging aan gemeente om te deel in diens (5 vrywilligers) + **VRAELYS**
- Verduidelik kortliks wat van hulle verwag sal word
- Na die preek sal ons by Nagmaalstafel staan – elke vrywilliger sal 'n sekere groep in die gemeente verteenwoordig: kinders, jeug, vroue, mans & bejaardes
- Simbole sal gebruik word om praktiese uiting te gee aan weeklaag wat ons as gemeente dalk ervaar

Gesang: Gesang ____ (as antwoord op seëngroet)

Skriflesing: Ps 13

Koorsang: ???

GEBED

Bediening van die Woord Navorser

Diens van die Heilige Nagmaal:

Navorser

- Hanteer eerste gedeelte:
 - Praktiese simboliek van weeklaag
 - Diens van verootmoediging
 - Apostoliese geloofsbelydenis
- Ds XXX is verantwoordelik vir die instelling van die Heilige Nagmaal

Koorsang:

Offergawes: Gesang ____

Slotsang : Gesang ____

Seën: Navorser

9.2. Addendum B - Sermon Afrikaans

Liewe gemeente, u het al verlede week kennis gekry dat ons vandag, tydens die Nagmaaldiens, 'n kans sal kry om bietjie te reflekteer oor “lament” of te wel “weeklaag/klagte”. Baie van u is seker maar skrikkerig vir wat vanoggend dalk hier kan uitbroei, maar kom ons kyk wat ons vandag kan leer uit Gods Woord onder leiding van Sy Gees.

Psalm 13 is 'n gedeelte wat redelik vol klagtes is, 'n klagte-lied wat deur hierdie persoon voorgedra word. Maar hoe sou ons 'n klaaglied/weeklaag verstaan? Ten diepste is dit eintlik 'n **vorm van rou**. Maar dit is **soveel meer** as dit. Dis 'n lied wat deur 'n enkel persoon gesing kan word, maar tog ook deur 'n hele gemeenskap. Dis 'n manier waarop ons kan vertel dat dinge heeltemal skeefgeloop het in ons lewens. Dis 'n manier waarop ons woorde probeer gee aan die ondenkbare. Dis 'n lied wat gewoonlik gaan oor dinge wat in die verlede gebeur het, maar dit kan ook gaan oor dinge wat nou aan die gebeur is of wat dalk toekomstige dimensies aanspreek. Wat belangrik is om te onthou in hierdie proses van weeklaag is dat die klaaglied gewoonlik 'n konneksie maak tussen **heling en rou**. Nog belangriker – is dat hierdie proses van weeklaag **eerlikheid en integriteit** vra van almal wat deelneem. Dit vra dat ons broos sal raak voor God en ook voor diegene wat die proses saam met ons meemaak.

Ons gelese gedeelte, Psalm 13, is glad nie 'n lang Psalm nie. In 'n paar verse beskryf hierdie digter op 'n intense manier wat in sy persoonlike lewe gebeur. Ons sien dat hierdie persoon nie eers met mooi woorde begin nie, maar daar word sommer onmiddelik weggespring met dit wat saak maak. Van die kommentare oor hierdie gedeelte dui aan dat dit 'n klassieke voorbeeld is van **persoonlike weeklaag of klagte**. Die klagte of **beskuldiging** teen God kom sommer in v1-2 voor. Dan word daar onmiddelik oorgegaan in 'n **versoekskrif/petisie** in v4-5. En dan eindig die Psalm in v6 met 'n uitdrukking van **vertroue en lof**.

“Hoe lank gaan U my nog bly vergeet, Here?

Hoe lank gaan U nog van my af weg kyk?

Hoe lank moet ek nog my eie planne maak en my dae met kommer deurbring?

Hoe lank sal die vyand my nog oorheers?”

Kan u die ongeduld en desperaatheid hoor? **Vier keer** vra hierdie digter na die tydsduur van sy lyding. Dit wil amper voorkom dat elke keer wanneer daar gevra word “hoe lank” dan verdiep die **intensiteit van desperaatheid**, en raak hierdie persoon net al hoe meer moedeloos. Het God dan nou vergeet van my nou dat dinge nie goed gaan in my lewe nie? Of weet God van my nood maar het besluit om sy gesig van my af te draai? Die volk van ouds het geglo, en dit ook ervaar, dat wanneer God toornig is teenoor hulle a.g.v hulle optrede, dan draai Hy gewoonlik Sy gesig weg van hulle – dan verskyn Hy nie meer aan hulle nie (Deut 31:17, Ps 27:8-9, Ps 102:2, Jes 8:17).

In hierdie uitroepe na God kan ons ook agterkom hoe kompleks ons lewe soms kan wees. Hierdie digter ervaar die lewe op ‘n spesifieke manier, maar in daardie ervaring is God ook teenwoordig, alhoewel daar ook tog ‘n gevoel van verlatenheid is – dat God nie teenwoordig is nie. So alhoewel die digter kla van God se afwesigheid, is dit tog reeds teenoor hierdie “afwesige” God wat hierdie versoekskrif ingebring word. Hy adresseer God as “**Here, my God**”.

In v4-5 word die petisie gerig en redes word verstrekkend waarom God moet antwoord.

- Luister na my
- Antwoord my
- Gee my nuwe krag

“Ek wil nie sterwe nie, anders sê my vyand hy het my oorwin en juig my verdrukke oor my ondergang”. Daar word nie duidelikheid gegee oor **wie** die vyand is nie. Sommige kommentare beweer dat die digter moontlik baie siek was en dat die dood die vyand simboliseer, maar daar is nie werklik bewyse hiervoor nie. Wat wel duidelik is, is dat daar noukeurige lyne getrek word tussen die digter, die vyand en God.

Die oorgang wat ons ervaar in hierdie paar verse – van klagte na ‘n versoek – kan ons heeltemal as logies aanvaar. Maar die oorgang wat ons ervaar van v1-5 na v6 kom nogal **heeltemal onverwags**. Een oomblik **kla en versoek** die digter nog en dan skielik sê hy: ... “*6 Ek hou vas aan u troue liefde, oor die uitkoms wat U gee, juig my hart. Ek wil sing tot eer van die Here, omdat Hy aan my goed gedoen het*”. Dis asof ons uitgenooi word om klagte en lof **gelyktydig** te ervaar eerder as aparte momente. Dit kan natuurlik ook aan ons die **kompleksiteit en dubbelsinnigheid** van die

lewe verduidelik – dat pyn en ekstase tog ook bymekaar kan hoort - **soos die kruisiging en die opstanding!** As gelowiges is ons tog **gelyktydig mense van die kruis en mense van die opstanding**. Ons word weer vanoggend hieraan herinner tydens die Nagmaalviering. Psalm 13 herinner ons eintlik daaraan dat ons nie Jesus kan volg sonder om ons kruis te dra nie (Mark 8:34).

Psalm 13 leer ons ook oor gebed. Dit wys duidelik aan ons dat gebed nie net **mooi uitdrukkings** het nie, maar dat daar tye in ons lewens is dat dit nodig is vir ons om **dapper, eerlik en sonder skaamte** ons **klagtes en versoeke** na die troon van Genade te neem. Hierdie tipe gebed daag ons uit om ons pyn en lyding, en ook dié van andere (gemeenskaplike weeklaag), te artikuleer op 'n manier wat ons nie altyd graag wil doen nie **omdat** ons bang is dat ons **God sal beledig, of mense sal skok, of onself in die skande sal steek**. In Psalm 13 word daar 'n stem gegee aan die dinge waaroor ons nie graag wil praat nie – alleenheid, kommer, vrees vir die dood en innerlike onrustigheid as gevolg van ons omstandighede. Maar dis juis hierdie uitdagings van die lewe waaroor ons kan bid.

Liewe gemeente, u wonder dalk nou, “Maar wat het weeklaag te doen met ons tyd hier in die kerk?”. Dit wil soms voorkom dat ons vanuit die veronderstelling lewe dat ons geloofsmense is en daarom sou dit nie reg wees om te kla nie. Die kernsaak hier is nie dat ons lewens nou net uit klagte moet bestaan nie, maar dat ons nieteenstaande ons klagtes nog steeds heling kan ontvang vir omstandighede waarin ons onself dalk mag bevind. Dink u nie dalk dat ons oneer aan God en ons geloof bewys wanneer ons nie tyd maak om te weeklaag, nie net oor dinge wat in ons persoonlike lewens gebeur nie, maar ook oor dinge wat in ons gemeenskappe en in ons land aan die gebeur is? Weekliks lees ons hoe mense sterwe a.g.v. geweld; ons lees en hoor hoe ons kinders verkrag word; ons lees van korrupsie onder ons leiers, ons sien mense wat te na gekom word omdat hulle nie status het nie. Daar is te veel om op te noem. Dit is wanneer ons van hierdie dinge bewus word dat ons nie moet nalaat om te weeklaag oor die toestand van ons kerk, ons gemeenskappe en ons samelewings nie.

Vanoggend gaan ons weer onthou hoe Jesus gely het, hoe Hy verneder was en hoe dit uiteindelik tot Sy dood gelei het. Ons onthou ook hoe Hy in hierdie donker tyd van Sy lewe ook geweeklaag

het. So wat beteken dit dan nou vir ons om dit elke keer te herlewe? Aan die een kant beteken dit dat God, in Jesus Christus, teenwoordig is in lyding. God is 'n slagoffer maar ook 'n getuie. Daarom kan die lyding van almal wat slagoffers is na die Nagmaalstafel gebring word en sodoende deur viering van die Heilige Nagmaal onthou word. Aan die ander kant, indien ons net die lyding van die Nagmaalstafel sou onthou dan is ons verlossingsherinneringe onvolledig. Die Heilige Nagmaal moet gevier word as die herinnering aan Jesus se lewe, sy kruisiging sowel as sy opstanding.⁴⁹⁸ Die Nagmaalstafel moet dus 'n plek wees waar ons kan “**onthou**” maar ook 'n plek wat ons “**herskep/gesond maak**”.

*“**Ons** hou vas aan u troue liefde, oor die uitkoms wat U gee, juig **ons harte**. **Ons** wil sing tot eer van die Here, omdat Hy aan **ons** goed gedoen het”.*

Amen

Gebed

Gaan oor tot praktiese uitbeelding van weeklaag

- Vra vrywilligers om na vore te kom (staan aan kant van tafel sodat tafel sigbaar is)
- Persone wat aan tafel gaan sit kan ook hulle plekke inneem
- Vra gemeente om stemming te handhaaf terwyl diakens na vore kom om tafeldoek af te haal.

Navorser:

- Jesus het as mens na hierdie aarde gekom. Wanneer ons deel raak van hierdie tafel dan raak ons ook deel van die beloftes wat Hy gemaak het aan ons.
- Ons dink weer aan die pyn en lyding wat Hy moes verduur, MAAR ons moet ons ook oopstel vir die heling wat Hy belowe het wat ons sal ontvang OMDAT Hy dit alles namens ons gedra het.
- Daarom, wanneer ons vanoggend prakties ons seer wil bekend maak aan God, doen ons dit nie soos mense wat geen hoop het nie. Nee, ons doen dit, wetende, dat Hy in alle omstandighede

⁴⁹⁸Redeeming Memories: A theology of healing and transformation by Flora A. Keshgegian, p224

met ons is, dat Hy verstaan wat ons ervaar, dat Hy vir ons ruimte bied, hier in Sy huis om vir Hom te vertel van die seer wat ons rondra; en dat ons in geloof kan wag op die heling wat Hy vir ons bied.

Simbool: Proe van soutwater

- Die soutwater op ons tonge herinner ons aan die “**southeid van ons tranes wat oor ons wange loop**” wanneer ons omstandighede te veel raak en ons uiting gee aan ons gevoelens (vra vrywilligers om die soutwater te proe en let op na hulle reaksies).
- Vra Ds XXX om die “Prayer of Lament” te bid

Prayer of Lament⁴⁹⁹

O God, you are our help and strength, our refuge in the time of trouble.	Psalm 124:8 Psalm 37:39
In you our ancestors trusted; They trusted and you delivered them.	Psalm 22:4
When we do not know how to pray as we ought, your very Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.	Romans 8:26
We plead for the intercession now, Gracious One.	
For desolation and destruction are in our streets, and terror dances before us.	Isaiah 59:7 Job 41:22
Our hearts faint; our knees tremble; our bodies quake; all faces grow pale.	Nahum 2:10
Our eyes are spent from weeping and our stomachs churn.	Lamentations 2:11
How long, O Lord, how long must we endure this devastation?	Isaiah 6:11
How long will destruction lay waste at noonday? Why does violence flourish while peace is taken prisoner?	Psalm 91:6
Rouse yourself! Do not cast us off in times of trouble.	Psalm 44:23
Come to our help; redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.	Psalm 44:26
For you are a gracious God abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.	Exodus 34:6
By the power of the cross, through which you redeemed the world, bring to an end hostility and establish justice in the gate.	1 Corinthians 1:17 Ephesians 2:14 Amos 5:15
For you will gather together your people into that place where mourning and crying and pain will be no more, and tears will be wiped from every eye.	Revelation 21:4
Hasten the day, O God for our salvation. Accomplish it quickly!	Isaiah 60:22
Amen	

⁴⁹⁹<http://www.cokesbury.com/pdf/VirginiaTech/PrayerofLament.pdf> (Accessed 30 June 2012)

Simbool: Aansteek van kerse

- Vra vrywilligers om die kerse aan te steek
- Nieteenstaande die donkerte wat ons soms ervaar in ons omstandighede wil ons met die aansteek van hierdie kerse erken en bely dat God vir ons 'n bergvesting is...

Prayer of Comfort and Hope

God our Comforter,
you are our refuge and strength,
a helper close at hand in times of distress.

You forgive what we have done
and what we have left undone;
your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

Help us so to hear the words of our faith
that our fear is dispelled,
our loneliness eased, and our hope reawakened.

May your Holy Spirit lift us
above our natural sorrow,
to the peace and light of your constant love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Simbool: Proe van heuning

- Vra vrywilligers om heuning te proe en kyk hulle reaksies
- Die heuning wat ons vanoggend proe, herinner ons aan die soet oomblikke wat ons tog ervaar in ons lewens; soet oomblikke wat moontlik gemaak word deur mense wat omgee; maar ook soet oomblikke wanneer ons besef, dat nieteenstaande ons omstandighede, ons ook saam met die Psalm-digter in Ps 121 kan sing ...

“Waar sal ons hulp vandaan kom?

Ons hulp kom van die Here wat hemel en aarde gemaak het”.

Simbool: Seën van olie en salwing van deelnemers

Prayer to consecrate oil (done by researcher)

Dear God, by the authority of Jesus,

I consecrate and dedicate this oil

for the purpose of anointing these volunteers,

who are representing different sections of this congregation this morning.

I do this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Vra Ds XXX om te help om die vrywilligers te salf.

Ons gaan nou die Naam van die Here loof. Wil u dit saam met my doen? Dan nooi ek u uit om saam met my te staan en die volgende woorde te herhaal:

Ons wil die Here loof vanoggend, met alles binne in ons wil ons

Sy heilige Naam loof;

Ons loof die Here en wil nie een van Sy weldade vergeet nie;

Hy vergewe al ons sonde;

Hy genees ons siekte;

Hy red ons van die graf;

Hy kroon ons met liefde en ontferming;

Hy laat ons die goeie in oorvloed geniet;

Hy skenk aan ons die jeugdige krag van die arend

Loof Sy heilige Naam!

Ps 103: 1-5

(Vrywilligers mag maar gaan sit)

Liewe gemeente:

In Jesus se lewe was daar tye wat Hy ook geweeklaag het; tye toe Sy realiteit vir Hom te veel geraak het. Een so 'n oomblik was toe Hy Sy Vader gevra het om die beker by Hom te laat verbygaan. Tog is daar een groot verskil tussen Jesus se weeklaag en ons weeklaag. Maak nie saak in watter omstandighede Jesus hom bevind het nie, Hy het nooit gesondig nie (Heb 4:15). Ons kan ongelukkig nie dieselfde sê nie. Daarom word ons in Miga 6 herinner aan hoe ons moet lewe:

1. Ons moet reg laat geskied;
2. Ons moet liefde en trou bewys; en
3. Ons moet bedagsaam leef voor God.

As gemeente moet ons vanoggend bely dat ons sondige mense is en alleen vergifnis deur God kan ontvang. In 1 Joh 1:9 belowe Gods Woord dat *“as ons ons sondes bely, Hy is getrou en regverdig. Hy vergewe ons ons sondes en reinig ons van alle ongeregtigheid”*. As u dus in ware berou na Jesus Christus kom vir verlossing dan verkondig ek vanoggend aan u volkome vergifnis van sonde in die Naam van die Vader en die Seun en die Heilige Gees. Amen.

Liewe gemeente, die feit dat u nog steeds staande is saam met my is 'n bewys dat u erken dat die Here God is – dat u Sy verlossing aanvaar en ook dat u in Hom glo. Kom laat ons dan ook nou vir **mekaar** vertel in wie ons glo deur die woorde van ons Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis: “Ek glo in God die Vader...”

(Vra gemeente om te sit)

Ek gee nou verrigtinge oor aan Ds XXX wat sal reël vir die uitdeel van die brood en wyn en wat ook die **HOOP en HELING** van hierdie Nagmaalsvieringe aan ons gaan verkondig.

9.3. Addendum C – Afrikaans sermon translated into English⁵⁰⁰

Dearly beloved, you received word last week that today, when we are celebrating Holy Communion, there will be a chance to reflect on lament. Many of you might be a bit jittery this morning because you are not sure what the outcome of this service would be but let us look at God's Word today, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and see what He has in store for us.

Psalm 13 is a portion of Scripture that is full of complaints. This is in fact a lament psalm that was composed by this poet. But how would we understand a lament? It is actually a form of mourning. But it is also so **much more**. It is a song that an individual can sing, or a whole community can sing it. It is a way in which you can tell others and God that things have not worked out well in your life. It is a manner in which we try to verbalise the pain and suffering that we are experiencing. It is a song that normally tells about the past, but it can also talk of the present and the future. Important to note is that this lament normally makes a **connection between healing and mourning**. Most importantly is that this process of lament asks for **honesty** and **integrity**, from all who participate. It asks of us to be humble before the Lord. It asks that we should show our fragile side to the Lord.

Psalm 13 is very short. In a few verses the poet describes, in an intense manner, what happened in his personal life. This person does not start with nice words. Some commentaries are of the opinion that this psalm is a classical example of a personal lament. The lament or accusation against God is found in verse 1-2. Then immediately the poet goes over into a petition in verse 3-4. And then the psalm ends in verse 5-6 with an expression of trust and praise.

- ¹ **How long**, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ² **How long** must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

⁵⁰⁰ Free English translation done by the researcher

Can you hear the impatience and desperation? **Four times** the poet wants to know how long his suffering will continue. It is almost as if the **intensity of the desperation** deepens with each “how long” that is uttered. The desperation just sinks in deeper. Did God forget about me now that things are not going well in my life? Or does God know about my suffering but has decided to turn his face from me? The Israelites believed, and also experienced, that when God was angry with them because of their actions, then God would turn his face away from them – then God does not appear to them anymore (Deut 31:17, Ps 27:8-9, Ps 102:2, Jes 8:17).

In these cries to God we are confronted with the complexities of our daily lives. This poet experienced life in a specific manner, but even in that unique experience God is still present. However, the poet experiences loneliness – that God is not present. So even though the poet moans about the absence of God, it is still to this “absent” God that the petition is taken. The poet addresses God as “**Lord, my God**”.

We find petitions and the poet gives reasons why God should answer.

- Look at me
- Listen to me
- Give me renewed strength.

“I don’t want to die because then my enemies will rejoice and say that they had conquered me”. We do not get any clarity about the identity of the enemies. Some commentaries are of the opinion that the poet might have been ill and that the enemy symbolised death. But there is no evidence for this. What we can see clearly is that specific lines are drawn between the poet, the enemies and God.

The transition from lament to request/petition is quite understandable and logical. But the abrupt transition that we come across in the last two verses comes a bit unexpectedly. One moment the poet still moans and requests and the next...

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me

It is as if we are invited to accept lament and praise as one moment in our lives. Of course it could also serve as a reminder of the complexity and the ambiguous nature of our lives – that pain and ecstasy can live together; like the crucifixion and the resurrection. As believers we are simultaneously people of the cross as well as people of the resurrection. We are reminded of this once again this morning when we celebrate the Holy Communion. Psalm 13 actually reminds us that if we want to follow Jesus, we need to bear our cross (Mark 8:34).

Psalm 13 also teaches us about prayer. It shows clearly that prayer cannot be made up just of appropriate expressions. Some times in our lives we need to be brave, honest and without shame when we take our laments and requests to the throne of grace. This type of prayer challenges us to articulate our pain and suffering, and also that of others, in a manner that we are not used to. We are scared to do it in this way because we do not want to offend God, shock people or shame ourselves. Psalm 13 gives voice to the things that we do not normally want to talk about – loneliness, worries, fear of death and restlessness because of our circumstances. But we need to understand that it is actually these challenges that we can pray about.

Dear brothers and sisters, you probably wonder what lament has to do with our time here in church. Sometimes we are under the impression that because we are people of faith it would not be appropriate to lament. Our lives do not consist only of lament. However, despite our lament we can still receive healing in our lives. Are we not dishonouring God, and our faith, if we do not lament about issues in our lives and in our communities? We read about deaths, violence, we hear how our children are being raped, we read about corruption, we see how people are oppressed because of their social status... It is when we are made aware of these things that we need to lament.

This morning we will recall how Jesus suffered, how he was humiliated and how all this culminated in his death. We also remember how Jesus, in the darkest days of His life also lamented. So what does this mean for us? What is the meaning of reliving this time and again? On the one hand it means that God, in Jesus Christ, is present in our suffering. God is a victim but also a witness. Therefore, the suffering of everyone who is a victim, can be brought to the Holy Communion table and remembered through the celebration of the sacrament. On the other

hand, if we were only to remember the suffering of the Holy Communion table our salvation memory won't be complete. This sacrament should be celebrated in memory of the life of Jesus, his crucifixion as well as his resurrection. The table should therefore be a place where we can "**remember**" but it should also be a place where we find **healing**.

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me

Amen

Prayer

9.4. Addendum D - Questionnaire

Lament in Liturgy: A Critical Reflection from an URCSA Perspective

Kindly complete the questionnaire and return it to the facilitator

Uniting Reformed Church - _____

Demographic Information:

AGE: 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70-79 ☐ 80-89 ☐

GENDER: Male ☐ Female ☐

Ministry: CYM ☐ Men's Ministry ☐ Youth Choir ☐ Brigade ☐

CWM ☐ Church Choir ☐ Church Council ☐

Other: Specify _____

Sunday Church Attendance: Once a month ☐ Twice a month ☐ More than twice a month ☐

1. Which ONE is most appropriate?

☐ I understand the concept of lament

☐ I have **some** understanding of the concept of lament

☐ I do not understand the concept of lament

2. Please select ONE. I learnt about lament through the following:

☐ Reading ☐ Bible Studies

☐ Explanations in sermons ☐ Other, _____

3. The meaning of lament was adequately explained in the sermon this morning

Yes ☐

No ☐

4. Were you able to get a better understanding of the **use of lament in the liturgy** during the service of the Holy Communion today?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5. If NO, explain briefly:

6. Which ONE is most appropriate?

☐ It would be helpful to people if we include lament in our liturgy **sometimes** (i.e. sermons, prayer meetings, songs)

☐ It would not be helpful to include lament in the liturgy of our congregation

7. In your opinion, could the inclusion of practical elements of lament in liturgy have a positive influence in your congregation?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. Any additional comments?

9.5. Addendum E – Questionnaire (Afrikaans version)

Lament in Liturgy: A Critical Reflection from an URCSA Perspective

Vul vraelys in en handig dit in by die fasiliteerder

Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk - _____

Demografiese Inligting:

OUERDOM: 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70-79 ☐ 80-89 ☐

GESLAG: Manlik ☐ Vroulik ☐

Bediening: CYM ☐ Mannebond ☐ Jeug Koor ☐ Brigade ☐

CWM ☐ Kerkkoor ☐ Kerkraad ☐

Ander: Spesifiseer _____

Sondag Erediens bywoning: 1 x 'n maand ☐ 2 x 'n maand ☐ Meer as 2 x 'n maand ☐

1. Watter EEN is meer van toepassing?

☐ Ek verstaan die konsep van weeklaag

☐ Ek verstaan tot 'n sekere mate die konsep van weeklaag

☐ Ek verstaan nie die konsep van weeklaag nie

2. Kies EEN. Ek het van weeklaag geleer deur middel van:

☐ Lees ☐ Bybelstudies

☐ Verduidelikings in preke ☐ Ander, _____

3. Die betekenis van weeklaag was voldoende verduidelik in die preek vanoggend

Ja ☐

Nee ☐

4. Kon u die gebruik van weeklaag in die liturgie vanoggend beter verstaan?

Ja ☐

Nee ☐

5. Indien NEE, verduidelik kortliks:

6. Watter EEN is meer van toepassing?

☐ Dit sal gemeente lede van hulp wees indien ons weeklaag soms in ons liturgie sou insluit (bv. in preke, bidure, liederes, ens.)

☐ Dit sal glad nie van hulp wees indien ons weeklaag sou insluit in die liturgie van ons gemeente nie

7. Is u van mening dat die insluiting van praktiese elemente van weeklaag in die liturgie 'n positiewe invloed sou kon hê in hierdie gemeente?

Ja ☐

Nee ☐

8. Enige addisionele kommentaar?

9.6. Addendum F – Questionnaire (Xhosa version)

Isililo kwinkqubo-nkonzo: Uphawulo ngcinga ngokwemeko URCSA

Nceda uzalise olu ludwe lwemibuzo uze ulibuyisele umququzeleli

Uniting Reformed Church - Mfuleni

Ulwazi malunga nesimo sendawo:

UBUDALA: 18-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70-79 ☐ 80-89 ☐

ISINI: Ndoda ☐ Mfazi ☐

INKONZO: Ulutsha ☐ Umanyano lwamadoda ☐ Ikwayala yolutsha ☐ iBrigeyidi ☐

Umanyano lwamakhosikazi ☐ Ikwayala yecawe ☐ Iqumrhu lebandla ☐

Ezinye: Chaza _____

Ukuya enkonzweni ngeCawa: Kanye ngenyanga ☐ Kabini ngenyanga ☐ Ngaphezu kwesibini ngenyanga ☐

1. Yeyiphi EYONA ifanelekileyo?

☐ Ndiyayiqonda ingqiqo ngesililo

☐ Ndinolwazi oluthile ngengqiqo yesililo

☐ Andinalwazi ngengqiqo yesililo

2. Nceda khetha IBENYE. Ndifunde ngesililo kwezi zinto zilandelayo:

☐ Ngokufunda ☐ Kufundo ngeBhayibhile

☐ Ngengcaciso kwiintshumayelo ☐ Ezinye, _____

3. Into ethethwa sisililo ichaziwe ngokucacileyo kwintshumayelo yanamhlanje

Ewe ☐ Hayi ☐

4. Ube nako na ukufumana ulwazi olungcono ngokusetyenziswa kwesililo kwinkqubo-nkonzo ngexesha lenkonzo yoMthendeleko oNgcwele namhlanje?

Ewe ☐ Hayi ☐

5. Ukuba HAYI, chaza ngokufutshane:

6. Yeyiphi EYONA ifanelekileyo?

☐ Kuyakuba luncedo ebantwini xa sinokufakela isililo kwinkqubo-nkonzo yethu ngamanye amaxesha (Umz. kwiintshumayelo, kwiinkonzo zemithandazo, emaculweni)

☐ Akungekhe kube luncedo ukufakela isililo kwinkqubo-nkonzo yebandla lethu

7. Ngokoluvo lwakho, ingaba ukufakelwa kwezinto eziphathekayo zesililo kwinkqubo-nkonzo kunganefuthe eliphilileyo kwibandla lakho?

Ewe ☐ Hayi ☐

8. Amanye amanqakwana ezimvo onawo?

9.7. Addendum G – Permission letter from the Research Ethics Committee



UNIVERSITEIT-STELLENBOSCH-UNIVERS
jou kennisvermenster • your knowledge partner

Approved with Stipulations New Application

04-Nov-2011
Mahokoto, Marlene MS

Protocol #: HS727/2011

Title: Lament in liturgy: A critical reflection from an URCSA perspective

Dear Mrs. Marlene Mahokoto,

The **New Application** received on **18-Oct-2011**, was reviewed by Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on .

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: **27-Oct-2011 -26-Oct-2012**

Present Committee Members:

Hattingh, Johannes JP
Theron, Carl CC
Somhlaba, Ncebazakhe NZ
Bitzer, Elias EM
Engelbrecht, Sidney SF
Gorgens, Gina G
Van Wyk, Berte B
Beukes, Winston WA

The Stipulations of your ethics approval are as follows:

1. Application form for ethics clearance:

1.1. In section 4 of the application form it is indicated that observations will take place during formal Sunday services as well as during informal prayer meetings of the different congregations. The permission letter from the [REDACTED] church has provided specific

permission for the observations to take place, whereas the other permission letters did not mention the fact that observations will be conducted. Lament could potentially be a very personal experience within which individuals may experience a range of strong emotions. The REC would like to request that the researcher clarify how the observations will be conducted (e.g. the mode of recording of the observations) and whether the church boards of the other congregations has given permission for these observations to take place. The REC acknowledges that obtaining individual informed consent before the observations is conducted may influence the integrity of the data and would like to suggest that the researcher considers a debriefing session (after the completion of the research) where the purpose of the research is discussed and the fact that observations were conducted, is revealed.

1.2. In section 6.3 of the application form it is indicated that the participants are subject to the person doing the recruiting. In all the permission letters from the churches mention is made of a sermon that the researcher will preach on the topic related to the research (and the questionnaire) after which the questionnaire will be distributed. Although mention is made regarding the fact that the researcher will not be part of the information process, nor the handling of the questionnaires, the REC would like to request that the researcher indicate how the respondents will not be subtly coerced into taking part in the research, given the fact that the researcher preached the sermon to them. The REC would appreciate a more detailed explanation of exactly how the questionnaires will be handed out and collected (e.g. will it be given out in the church whilst everyone is still sitting?) so as to avoid any subtle coercion for participation.

2. Consent form:

2.1. Please add in the institutional affiliation (i.e. Stellenbosch University) of Malene Fouche in section 9 of the consent form.

Standard provisions

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number (HS727/2011)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

After Ethical Review:

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health (healthres@pgwc.gov.za Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health (Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard (awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za, Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC. Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.
If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

Included Documents:

Questionnaire_English
Consent form
Research proposal
Letter of permission 1
Letter of permission 3
Letter of permission 4
Letter of permission 2

Questionnaire_Xhosa
Application form

Sincerely,

Sidney Engelbrecht
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.
2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.
3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.
4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research protocols at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research protocol and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Reports to Sponsor. When you submit the required reports to your sponsor, you **must** provide a copy of that report to the REC. You may submit the report at the time of continuing REC review.

9. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

10. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

11. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

9.8. Addendum H – Questionnaire guide for ministers

URCSA-X

1. Hoe lank is jy nou al in die gemeente?
2. Wat is jou gevoel rondom die opkoms van die gemeente na die eredienste?
3. Dit blyk laments kom meestal voor in gebed. Is dit ook jou ervaring?
4. Dink jy ons as leiers maak nie laments deel van ons dienste nie?
5. Wat is jou gevoel rondom 'n "re-discovery" en 'n "re-claiming" van laments binne ons liturgie?

URCSA-Y

1. Hoe lank is jy nou al in die gemeente?
2. Jy noem dat jy die gemeente ervaar as "tradisioneel". Sou jy meen dat daar tog 'n verandering te bespeur is in die "mindset" van mense?
3. Sou jy sê dat mense vasgevang is in die "notion" dat ons oorwinnaars in Christus is en daarom nie kla nie? Ons moet dus net jubel en juig voor die Here?
4. In jou opinie, in ons tradisie, hoe kan ons laments deelmaak van ons eredienste?

URCSA-Z

1. Hoe lank is u nou in die gemeente?
2. Wat is u ervaring in die gemeente oor die algemeen?
3. Kan 'n mens maklik nuwe dinge "introduce"?
4. Wat is u ervaring rondom die tema van laments? Spesifiek rondom ons preek van vanoggend?
5. My ervaring in gemeentes is dat laments meestal in gebed geadresseer word. Wat is Mfundisi se ervaring?
6. Is dit dalk as gevolg van die liturgie van ons kerk?
7. Do you think there is a need for the re-discovery and re-introduction of laments?

9.9. “Thick descriptions”⁵⁰¹

9.9.1. Uniting Reformed Church – X

9.9.1.1. Sunday of contributions/offerings - 05 February 2012

I’m travelling through the beautiful mountainous area of Stellenbosch to get to this small town. I am quite nervous this morning because it is the first time that I will be doing “thick descriptions”. Will I be able to observe everything? Are my note-taking skills adequate? I arrive at the church⁵⁰² at 09h40. I greet one of the ladies and ask for directions to the vestry. She is very friendly and shows me the way. On my way to the front door I see a familiar face and am greeted very warmly. I don’t talk too long as the church council is waiting for me. Upon entering the vestry, the church council members, including the minister, are standing in a circle. They are talking informally about the daily challenges that the congregants are experiencing. I greet everyone with a firm handshake and one of the elders makes space for me next to the minister.

The minister interrupts their conversation and introduced me to everyone. He reminds the church council about my application to do empirical studies in the congregation and also inform them that I will say a few words to the congregation – basically just informing them briefly about my research. *This reminder is basically just for the sake of the new church council members who were not present when my application letter was dealt with.* The church council is happy with this arrangement. The atmosphere is quite relaxed. One of the church council members reads a few verses from Scripture and then asks us to hold hands and pray the “Our Father” prayer.

For my next visits I will inform only the minister that I will be coming. I will also not go into the vestry again because I want to do the observations before, during and after the service.

⁵⁰¹ All information which has been directly observed through the process of “thick descriptions” will be written in ordinary letters. Comments of the researcher will be in italics. Confidentiality will be observed and therefore names and places that could identify the congregations and individuals that participated in this research will be omitted.

⁵⁰² Statistical information for 2012: Baptised members (preschool = 30, junior catechism = 70, senior catechism = 16), 95% attendance for senior catechism classes and 40-50% attendance for junior catechism classes. Confirmed members = 560; 1 Full-time minister, 7 elders and 6 deacons. Attendance for services: Holy Communion 45%, Sunday morning services 50% and evening services once a month 5%. 246 Home visitations were done by the minister. 2 Marriages were confirmed. The congregation has an outreach group of 9 members who worked outside the Western Cape borders during the June – July holidays for a period of 2 weeks.

1. Ritual Space⁵⁰³

Building (outside). It is a beautiful old building with a church hall next to it. The church building displays the year “1937” and on one of the outside walls the following words have been written in the cement “NGZ KERK ZIENDE OP JEZUS 1937”. There is a bell that is still in working condition.

Building (inside). The CD that was produced by the church choir is displayed on the entrance of the hall. There is also a notice board with information. There are no airconditioners in the hall but there are a few fans in the ceiling. All the windows are open and the lights are switched off.

The chairs in the hall have been arranged in four sections. The choir and the church council have designated chairs in front. The pulpit is in the centre in front with a wooden cross to its right. The choir sits on the right-side of the pulpit. There is quite a number of young people present. There does not seem to be a designated seating arrangement. People are seated in a mixed way and it seems as if some families are seated together as well. Children also come in their numbers and are seated randomly.

2. Ritual Objects

People are carrying their Bibles and hymn books. The minister has provided the researcher with a printout of the liturgy. The Christ-candle is lit during the service. There is a cross to the left side of the pulpit. Some vases are arranged in front, on the stage, as well as around the cross. There is also a crown of thorns on the cross.

3. Ritual Time

The worship service is on a Sunday morning from 10h00 to 11h30. Some people are standing outside, talking to one another. It is a very hot day, 35 degrees, and people are enjoying the coolness of the early morning before they go inside. After the service people are still interacting with each other for about 15 minutes. People also approach the researcher to greet and to find out about the studies. The researcher knows a few people personally from previous interactions with the congregation in 2003 and they talk a bit

⁵⁰³ The descriptions are done according to the guidelines of Ronald Grimes in his book *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Nashville, Tenn. : Columbia South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

longer, enquiring after the welfare of my family. It is very hot outside and some people are in a hurry to get home.

The church is situated close to the entrance of the town. However, this is a very small town, nestled in the mountains, and as such no real noise is experienced. There is a quiet atmosphere all around. The basic sounds which could be observed were the voices of people.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

Communication took place in Afrikaans⁵⁰⁴. A narrative language was used according to the Scripture reading. Emphasis was placed on the honour of God as well as voluntary services in the different organizations of the church. The reading was taken from Judges 5:1-5, 15-16. Hymns (133, 169, 353 and 197) were sung during the service under the guidance of the organist.

It is impossible to repeat exactly what was said during the sermon (unless of course it was recorded). However, a brief summary of the meditation follows.

- Die tema is:- “Het jy al aangemeld vir diens?
- Vrywillige diens is nodig in al die organisasies van die kerk
- Geestelike dienswerk moet ook verrig word
- Lied van Debora Rigters 5:15-16 “Waarom het jy bly sit?”
- Debora, ‘n vrou, was opgerig deur God as ‘n leier. Sy en Barak het manne gelei tot oorwinning. Sy sing ‘n lied tot eer van God. Van Ruben sing sy, “Waarom het jy bly sit?” Sy bevraagteken Ruben se versuim.
- God se eer was vir Debora op die spel. Die stryd waarvan Ruben ‘n buitestaander gebly het, ons stry vandag nog daardie stryd. Maar ons moet aanmeld te midde van ons vyande; te midde van ons stryd.
- Debora kry Ruben voor stok. “Ruben, waarom het jy bly sit? En dit terwyl jou volk in ‘n stryd om lewe en dood gewikkel was?” Dit was belangrik vir Debora dat almal

⁵⁰⁴ Notes were taken in English. However, summaries of the sermons are done in Afrikaans as well as in English. Free translation was done by the researcher. The Afrikaans translations will be placed between square brackets [].

moes saamveg. Moenie vaskyk teen jou omstandighede nie; God is almagtig. Ons word opgeroep tot 'n geestelike stryd. Ons kan nie toeskouers wees terwyl Satan sy vurige pyle afskiet nie. Ons moet blymoedig staan.

- God het ons kerk geroep tot 'n profetiese stem. Die kerk was deur die eeue heen nog altyd opgeroep tot 'n stryd. Die kerk moet getrou en gehoorsaam bly aan die stem van die Evangelie.
 - Gaan ons toelaat dat ander offers bring terwyl ek soos Ruben bly sit? Meld ek aan vir diens?
 - Ons kan met ons vertwyfeling na God gaan. Ons kan met alles na God gaan. Watter fase in jou lewe jy ook al is, jy kan na God gaan – ons magtige aanvoerder.
 - Het jy al aangemeld vir diens? Kom ons meld aan...
 - Waarom het jy bly sit Ruben terwyl God elkeen nodig het? Amen
-
- *[The theme for this sermon is “Have you reported for duty yet?”.*
 - *Voluntary service is needed in the organizations of our church*
 - *Spiritual upliftment work must be done*
 - *Song of Deborah Judges 5:15-16 “Why did you stay?”*
 - *Deborah, a woman, was chosen by God as a leader. She and Barakh lead men to victory. She sang a song of praise to God. But she questioned Ruben’s negligence.*
 - *For Deborah the honour of God was at stake. Ruben was an outsider to the struggle. Even today, we are still in the midst of this struggle for God’s honour. However, we need to report for duty regardless of our circumstances.*
 - *Deborah wanted to know from Ruben why he did not do anything while his people were fighting for their lives. It was important for Deborah that everyone should be part of the fight. It was a struggle for life and death. We should not be stopped by our circumstances. God is almighty and we can trust Him. We are called to be part of a spiritual battle. We cannot be spectators while Satan is launching a full-scale war on the church. We need to stand firm.*
 - *God call the church to have a prophetic voice. Throughout the ages, the church has always been called to be loyal and obedient to the voice of the gospel.*

- *Are we going to allow others to bring a sacrifice while we are sitting like Ruben? Let us report for duty!*
- *We can approach God when we are desperate. Yes, we can go to God with everything. Elisabeth Ross, a psychologist, is of the opinion that we can even approach God when we are shocked, depressed; even when we have accepted our circumstances.*
- *It really does not matter in what phase of your life you are, you can always go to God.*
- *Have you reported for duty already? Come, let us report for duty...*
- *Why are you sitting like Ruben when God needs each one of us?]*

During the sermon, only the voice of the minister was heard. The other voices that were audible were the choir and the congregants when they were singing. The choir contributed beautifully to this service.

Quite a few prayers were offered during the service, most being prayers of thanksgiving - thanking God for his mercies bestowed upon us; asking God to guide us when we meditate on His word and also to bless us while we are in His presence.

5. Ritual Identity

A lot of young people are present. A few older people, neatly dressed, are also in the pews. The children were behaving very well for the duration of the service. I also see and hear quite a few babies. Some of them are crying during the service but they are comforted inside the church and the congregation does not seem bothered with the fact that these babies are not taken outside to minimize the noise.

People are dressed very neatly. The young people are dressed in a relaxed fashion but still with the necessary respect for the event. *The minister comes across as very approachable.* He is dressed formally in a black suit, white shirt and white tie. There is an HIV/AIDS ribbon on his left shoulder.

I did not observe that my presence caused any nervousness amongst the congregants. They went about their business and made me feel very welcome in their midst.

When the confession is done, there is an atmosphere of contriteness. But for the rest of the service a light and upbeat atmosphere exists.

At the end of the service I observe a few children standing outside in conversation with a church council member. They are not sure how they will get home and ask the member who will give them a lift. I can see that the man wants to get into the church building but he does not want to leave the children to their own devices. I hear him say that they should just wait for him and he will organize something. The children seem very comfortable with him and he also seems very patient with them. *Throughout the service, and even now, I observe that this is a “child-friendly” ministry.*

6. Ritual Action

People are mostly seated during the service, except for the occasions when they sing and the confession part of the service. The minister is standing most of the time. The Bible is read, hymns are sung and prayers are offered.

The congregation is engaged in the praise and worship session when the minister, researcher and church council enters. When the congregants become aware of their presence, everyone stands up. The minister walks in first, then the researcher and then the rest of the church council members. *In most of our congregations the minister walks in first. Is this an indication of the leadership model that this congregation adheres to?* The minister approaches the pulpit and stands in silent prayer while the rest of the church council take their seats at the front of the one wing. The researcher takes an empty seat, a few rows behind the church council. The congregation continues with the praise and worship and sings two more songs before they sing “Our Father”. The end of this song is an indication that the worship service has now formally started.

The minister expresses the hope that everyone will enjoy the service even though it is so hot. He immediately hands over to the scribe for the announcements. The scribe briefly makes a few announcements concerning the activities of the coming week. While she is busy with the announcements I discreetly observe the seating arrangements as well as the general layout of the hall. *I hope that the congregants will not be too intimidated by the fact that I am taking notes.*

At the end of the announcements the scribe asks everyone who celebrated their birthday or wedding anniversary to come to the front. Nine people take their place in a semi-circle in front of the cross. One of the church council members congratulates them. The mood is very light at this point. After the church council member has extended the good wishes of the church he also asks everyone to bow their heads so that we can pray for all the members who are sick and unable to attend the service. He prays in earnest for the sick, the elderly as well as those who are struggling with challenges in their lives. *There is an element of lament in his prayer, especially when he mentions all the challenges that people are facing.* People are agreeing vocally throughout the prayer. After this the organist plays “It’s a welcome here” and people move around and greet each other. People are hugging and kissing each other, others just greet each other formally with a handshake. Quite a number of people also come to the researcher to greet. The atmosphere is friendly and very light.

The minister then approaches the pulpit and the whole congregation becomes silent. He greets the congregation, emphasizing that God has called each one by their name and that we belong to God. He asks that we become quiet and that we should become aware that God is with us, notwithstanding our personal circumstances. After the introduction we sing hymns 133 and 169. The minister directs everyone to p.186 in the hymn book. We all do the responsive reading of the law of God. After the reading we are invited to do confession of our faith.

The service ends with the priestly blessing.

9.9.1.2. Sunday morning children’s service - 18 March 2012

1. Ritual Space

The lights and the fans are switched off but there is enough light in the hall and it is not stuffy.

2. Ritual Objects

The liturgical area immediately grabs my attention. A wooden cross with a purple cloth around it is quite prominent. A poster with the following words “God se plan vir die

wêreld⁵⁰⁵” is displayed in front. The chairs are arranged in four wings. There is a cloth against the wall with the words “VGK-Kylemore Gestig 1980”. The walls of the hall are decorated with pictures of nature.

3. Ritual Time

I arrived at the church at 09h55 and the church hall is filled to capacity. The few empty chairs are filled very quickly. Church finishes at 11h15.

Several people are standing outside, talking with each other. It is quite clear that this is a very close-knit congregation. A few of the congregants also approached the researcher. They just wanted to greet and also find out how the studies are going. We talk for a few minutes and then people greet and leave. By 11h40 the church premises are empty.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The congregation is singing songs, specifically for children. While they are singing, actions are made to emphasize the lyrics. Some of the songs are “Ek is nie ‘n stapsoldaatjie nie... ek is Jesus se soldaatjie”; “Lees jou Bybel, bid elke dag”; “As Hy kom op die wolke van die hemel⁵⁰⁶”. The church is full of children and teenagers. I see that quite a few young people are wearing T-shirts with the slogan “I am born to stand out, not to fit in”. The organist coordinates songs and an impromptu competition is held between the children and the adults.

There is such an electric vibe in the hall and the children look very excited.

5. Ritual Identity

A few ladies are dressed very formally. They are even wearing hats. *I don't see this very often in our congregations.* In general, people are dressed very casually.

The children sing “Jesus loves the little children”.

⁵⁰⁵ God's plan for the world

⁵⁰⁶ Loosely translated these songs are “I'm not a foot soldier... I am a soldier for Jesus; Read your Bible and pray every day; When He comes on the clouds of heaven”.

The minister and church council enter the hall. The minister walks in front. The congregation sings “Our Father” while they are entering.

The minister welcomes everyone. He does not wear a toga. The researcher is also welcomed. The minister emphasizes that they are a church who are “youth-friendly”, i.e. they make room for the young people in the church so that they also feel part of the family. The service will be done by the children. The theme of the service is “God’s plan for the world”.

The scribe goes to the front and does the announcements. The activities of all the wards for the coming week are highlighted.

The minister comments on the achievements of some of the people that were congratulated earlier. One person celebrated his seventy-ninth year. There was a forty-eighth wedding anniversary. One of the congregants also received a degree in Physiotherapy. The minister stresses the fact that God has a plan for our lives. However, we need to be responsible when we make decisions in our lives. He continues to say that during the Passion Week we get a glimpse of what God planned for us. It was an expensive plan because God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to die for us. God’s plan is our salvation.

6. Ritual Action

The Sunday school gets the opportunity to welcome everyone and also to congratulate everyone who celebrated a birthday or an anniversary. People are reminded to switch off their cellphones. Everyone who celebrated an event is asked to come to the front. A young girl does the congratulations. It is difficult to hear her because she does not use the microphone. The congregation sings “The Lord loves you” while everyone is given a handshake. The minister also goes to the front and gives everyone a handshake while he exchanges a few words with them.

There is an easy-going atmosphere in the building. People are smiling and are looking relaxed.

Blessing: "I know what plans I have for you; thoughts of peace and prosperity so that you may have a future filled with hope. God said "let the children come to me". This God blesses you this morning. In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

[*Votum en seëngroet: "Ek weet wat Ek vir julle beplan, sê die Here: voorspoed en nie teenspoed nie; Ek wil vir julle 'n toekoms gee, 'n verwagting!". God sê "Laat die kindertjies na my toe kom". Hierdie God wil jou vanoggend seën – in die Naam van die Vader, die Seun en die Heilige Gees, Amen.*]

The congregation now sings "We bless your Name, Almighty One. We bow before your throne". The young girl then prays a prayer from Psalm 51 (the 1933 translation). This is a Psalm of David in which he laments and begs God to have mercy on him. Once again it is difficult to hear her because she does not use the microphone. The young man standing with her in front offers her the microphone. She reluctantly accepts it and uses it to read the rest of the Psalm.

After the prayer the congregation sings "It's a welcome here" and everyone greets one another warmly. There are friendly smiles all around. People walk around in the church while they greet. Some even hug and kiss. Then they sing "Smile a while" and everyone returns to their chairs.

The liturgy is quite flexible and relaxed this morning. Probably because it is a service that focuses on the children.

The children are invited to sing a song. All of them move to the stage area. They sing "Siyakudumisa – we want to praise you Lord".

Spiritual dancing is done by a group of children. Their song starts with "As we gather in this place today". The smaller children struggle to see what's happening on the stage. Some of the parents lift the kids so that they have a better view. The chorus of the song says "This is your house, your home Lord. We welcome you today". Three children are the main dancers and the rest of the group dance only when the chorus plays. The faces of the children are bright and happy. The smiles are huge. It is evident that they are enjoying this moment.

A young girl does the Scripture reading from Psalm 8:1-10. The children portray the creation narrative. They have posters that depict each day of creation. When they say "Let there be light" a group of children who are seated on the stage say "and God saw that it was Good". This group consists of very young children. After they have depicted the creation the children sing "My Lord can do anything".

[Die kinders beeld die Skepping uit deur middel van verskillende plakkate. Elke keer wanneer die spesifieke dag aangekondig word wat die Here gemaak het, is daar 'n koor van kinders wat sê "En God het gesien dit was goed!". Elke dag wat God gemaak het word deur middel van 'n plakkaat uitgebeeld.]

All the children now sing together and the words of the song are as follows:

He makes the stars to shine

He makes the roly sea

He makes the mountains high

And He makes me

This is why I love Him.

Summary of meditation:

When we look at our world today it is difficult to believe that everything that God made was good. In Revelations 21:1-5 we read of a new heaven and a new earth, a new creation. What went wrong? Did God go wrong with the first creation? No, sin ruined everything. God sent his Son to save us. He loves us very much. Let us go out into the world and share this love.

[As ons vandag rondom ons kyk, kan ons nie glo dat God alles goed gemaak het nie. In Openbaring 21:1-5 lees ons van 'n nuwe hemel en nuwe aarde – dus 'n nuwe skepping. Wat het dan verkeerd gegaan? Het God verkeerd gegaan met Sy eerste skepping? Nee, die sonde het alles kom bederf. God het sy Seun gestuur om ons van ons sonde te verlos. Sy liefde is groot vir ons. Laat ons uitgaan en daardie liefde versprei.]

A group of twelve young girls perform another spiritual dance on stage (We come to bless your Name, King of Kings).

The offerings are collected by older children while the congregation sings songs. The offerings are blessed with a song.

The Spirit Foundation organization is then given a chance to explain what they can provide for young people. They provide social and life skills and try to equip children holistically in terms of coping with everyday challenges. Their selection criteria consist of the following: young people should be academically talented, committed and in need. A few of the group members then bless the congregation with a song.

Hold me now under your wings
Cover me within your mighty hands
When the ocean rise and the thunder roars
I will soar with you above the stars
Father you are king over the plants alone
I will be still, know you are God.

The Sunday school thanks the Spirit Foundation organization for their participation in the service. They also thank the church council for giving them the space and opportunity to lead the service. The minister thanks the Sunday school children and teachers for their willingness to participate actively in the service that morning. He confirms that the congregation loves the children very much and that they are very proud of all of them. God has big plans for the youth of this congregation. The children and young people are present today and as such they must be given a chance to reach their full potential. The message for adults and children alike is that God has a plan for each and every one of us.

Everyone sings "He's got the whole world in His hands".

Benediction: "I know what plans I have for you; thoughts of peace and prosperity so that you may have a future filled with hope. The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen".

People move out of the church from the front rows while the rest of the congregation sings.

9.9.1.3. Holy Communion Service – 27 May 2012

1. Ritual Space

Today is the conclusion of Pentecost. I arrive at 09h40. The church bell is ringing and it is a beautiful sound. I have not heard a church bell rung for a very long time. The Sunday school groups are still busy in the church. One class sits in one corner of the building and another class sits on the stage. They finish at 09h45 and the congregants enter the building one by one. The minister wanders through the church and sees me and my son. He approaches us and greets us warmly.

2. Ritual Objects

URC crest is on a piece of cloth. Overhead projector is used this morning. The display shows “Die Heilige Gees, Welkom by Pinkster 2012⁵⁰⁷”, with an image of a white dove with open wings. Many colourful flowers in different vases. There are also pot plants. This gives a festive atmosphere.

3. Ritual Time

At 09h50 several people are in the building. The Sunday school children are seated already. The church is almost full to capacity at 09h55. The service ends at 12h00 with the Priestly blessing⁵⁰⁸ done by the minister in the following words: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. [*“Die Here sal julle seën en julle beskerm; die Here sal tot julle redding verskyn en julle genadig wees; die Here sal julle gebede verhoor en aan julle vrede gee!”*]

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The organist plays while we are waiting on the minister and church council members. People are talking with each other in a relaxed fashion. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere in the building. I can also hear a few childrens voices every so often. The

⁵⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit. Welcome to Pentecost 2012

⁵⁰⁸ Numbers 6:24-26

organist asks the congregation to sing together “This is the day that the Lord has made”. Everyone joins in immediately. There are several young people in church. They seem to be in the majority. The congregation sings various songs of praise while we are waiting on the church council. Most of the songs focus on the Holy Spirit.

5. Ritual Identity

The church council enters the hall at 10h02. The minister walks in front. The congregation stands and sings Our Father. The announcements are done by the scribe. *Everyone is seated now and I see now that the church is not so full.* The researcher is welcomed.

The minister is dressed in a black suit, white shirt and white tie. He is wearing his toga with a red stole over his shoulders. Those who have celebrated their birthdays and wedding anniversaries are congratulated. Everyone sings “It’s a welcome here”. People move around and give each other a handshake; some exchange hugs as well.

6. Ritual Action

The minister lights a candle before he moves to the pulpit. He tells the congregation that it is important to live life to the full because the King is coming. God gives new life. He asks a pregnant woman to stand and then he elaborates about “new life”. In his prayer he asks for growth and a life of victory for the congregation. He requests renewed energy for the ministry of the congregation. He then blesses the congregation. Afterwards we sing hymns 56 and 206.

The minister introduced the preacher and wishes him well.

The Scripture reading is from 2 Timothy 2:1-23. The reading is done by two women. The preacher starts with the sermon at 11h45. He thanks the minister and church council for the opportunity that they have afforded him to bring the message that day. He thanks them for their continued support and prayers. He asked the congregation to sing the theme song of the week – “Meet my need Lord”. Afterwards a prayer is done.

Summary of the sermon:

We must be witnesses of God's Word. God wants to renew our lives. He wants to bind us to him so that we can serve Him. We must be witnesses.

He shows a picture of the coach of the Stormers. Verse one and two of the passage refers to an image of a trainer. A trainer drills his players and prepares them to be successful. However, the trainer must be an example. As Christians, we also need to be an example. He tells the story of a father and his son that went into their vegetable garden. The father asked his son to wait and not follow him into the garden because he did not want the vegetables to be ruined by their feet. However, the son did not listen and followed the father into the garden. The father was very angry and shouted at the boy, saying that he might step on the vegetables and then they would be ruined. But the son answered that he would never step on the vegetables and ruin them because he was walking in his father's footsteps the whole time.

Example: The preacher shows a picture of a soldier on the battlefield. He asks whether we could send a young boy to be a soldier. The response is "no" because the young boy does not have any training. A soldier must be trained before going off to the battlefield. The same should happen in our lives as Christians. We are empowered during services, prayer meetings, etc. Are we soldiers for Jesus? He spontaneously starts to sing the song "Ek is nie 'n stapsoldaatjie nie⁵⁰⁹" and asks the children to sing along. The apostle Paul talks about "being oppressed and suffering for the Name of Jesus". We need to be well prepared to be a soldier for God. We need to be focused. Our mission on earth is to serve and worship God. We need to give our life to God unconditionally. He tells the story of a little girl who did not have any money for collection. When the deacons came around with the offering box she stepped inside it and prayed "Lord, I don't have any money but I give myself to you".

Example: He shows a picture of athletes and comments on their clothing. He reiterates that it would not be wise to jog with a suit. You must be dressed properly and you need to focus when you exercise.

Example: He showed a picture of a farmer. A farmer is a hard worker and must be dedicated to the task at hand. Farmers are dependent on nature for a good harvest.

⁵⁰⁹ I am not a foot-soldier

Example: He shows a picture of someone who is hard at work. Make yourself available to God. Do not be shy to proclaim the Word of God. What is the church doing? Are we ready to proclaim?

Example: He shows a picture of a ceramic jar – a vessel. The church of Christ is a vessel. It is important to know our creator. We read in Jeremiah 18:6 “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand”. A jar can hold different things. What are we keeping in our jars? Should we give the contents of our jar to God so that He can resurrect Pentecost in our hearts anew? The jar should be usable and available. It should be given to God so that He can use it. In Luke 10 we read that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. We should be obedient to the call. God needs us! But what is in our vessel? God gave us a gift to be His witness.

The preacher turns his attention to the many vases in the liturgical area. He comments that in most cases people do not pay attention to the vase. The attention is focused on the flowers inside the vase. It is the same us. People don't just look at your face but they focus their attention on who you are internally as well. Amen.

[Ons moet getuies wees van God se Woord. God wil ons nuut maak. Ons moet getuie-draers wees. Prediker wys 'n foto van Allistair Coetzee, afrigter van Stormers, en wil by gemeente weet of hulle die man ken. Vers 1 en 2 van gelese gedeelte gebruik die beeld van 'n afrigter. 'n Afrigter dril sy spelers want hulle word voorberei om suksesvol te wees. Die afrigter moet self ook 'n voorbeeld wees. As Christene moet ons ook 'n voorbeeld wees.]

Voorbeeld: Soldaat (veg op grens, oorlogsveld)

Ons kan nie 'n seuntjie stuur om 'n soldaat te wees nie want hy het geen opleiding nie. 'n Soldaat moet geoefen wees voor hy oorlog kan voer. Ons word toegerus tydens eredienste, bidure, stiltetye, ens. Is ons soldate vir Christus? (sing spontaan “Ek is nie 'n stapsoldaatjie nie” en vra kinders ook om saam te sing). Paulus praat van verdrukking lei en swaarkry vir Jesus. Jy moet goed toegerus wees om 'n soldaat vir Jesus te wees. 'n Soldaat moet gefokus wees. Ons missie op aarde is om God te dien en te aanbid. Ons moet ons lewens onvoorwaardelik aan God gee. Hy vertel vinnig die verhaal van 'n jong dogter wat vir die diaken gevra het om vir haar die kollekte bord te gee. Sy klim daarop en bid – Here ek het nie geld nie maar ek gee my alles vir u.

Voorbeeld: Prent van 'n atleet

Praat oor die kleredrag van die atleet. Jy kan nie met 'n pak hardloop nie. Jy moet reg geklee wees en gefokus wees. Jy moet oefen.

Voorbeeld: *Prent van 'n boer*

'n Boer is 'n harde werker. 'n Boer moet toegewyd wees. 'n Boer is afhanklik van die natuur vir 'n goeie oes.

Voorbeeld: *Prent van 'n werker*

Dis harde werk. Lê jou daarop toe om jouself tot beskikking van God te stel. Iemand wat nie skaam is nie maar die Woord van God sal uitdra. Wat maak die kerk van Christus? Is ons gereed?

Voorbeeld: *Prent van 'n erdekruik*

'n Vaas. Die kerk van Christus is 'n erdekruik. Dis belangrik wie ons gemaak het. Jeremia 18:16 – soos klei in die hande van 'n pottebakker, so is jy in my hand. 'n Kruik kan verskillende dinge hou/huisves. Wat hou ons vandag in ons kruike wat ons vir God moet gee sodat Hy opnuut Pinkster in ons harte kan uitstort? Die kruik moet tot God se beskikking gestel word. In Lukas 10 lees ons van die oes wat groot is en die arbeiders is min. Kom ons bid dat mense gehoorsaam sal wees aan die roepstem van God. God het ons nodig, maar wat is in ons kruik?]

The sermon closes with a prayer. Afterwards, an invitation was extended to anyone in need of prayer. They are welcome to stay behind after the service.

The preacher moves away from the pulpit and a few church council members prepare the liturgical area for the service of the Holy Communion.

The minister requests the church choir to sing. They sing “This is your house Father, come and dwell”, while the organist leads them. After this song, the minister prays and enters into a short discussion with the congregation as preparation for the Holy Communion. He stresses that we now get a chance to give ourselves to the Lord. He then invites everyone to partake in the sacrament and he reminds everyone that we worship a gracious God (John 3:16). We should not take part of this sacrament out of habit. A few church council members prepare the table while the organist plays a song. Six people join the minister at the table – all men. The bread and wine are distributed amongst the members. Two women church council members distribute the bread while four men distribute the wine and juice. When everyone has been served the minister does the institution with the following words: “The cup of thanksgiving and the bread are symbolic of what God has done for us. The bread is the body of Christ. Take it, eat it and believe that the body of Christ was broken for us for the complete reconciliation of our sin.”

[Beker van danksegging en die brood is simbolies van dit wat God vir ons gedoen het. Die brood is die liggaam van die Here. Neem, eet en glo dat die liggaam van Christus gebreek is vir ons tot volkome versoening van ons sonde.]

The congregants eat the bread. The minister also serves everyone at the table.

The institution of the wine is done with the following words: "The cup of thanksgiving reminds us about the precious blood of our Lord that was spilled on the cross. Take, drink, remind yourself and believe that His precious blood was spilt for the reconciliation of our sins."

[Die beker van danksegging herinner ons aan die kosbare bloed van ons Here Jesus wat gestort is tot volkome versoening van ons sonde"]

Everyone drinks of the wine and/or grape juice.

The minister does a prayer of worship and one of the church council members does a prayer of thanksgiving. The Apostolic confession is then recited. The offerings are taken while we sing songs. The offerings are blessed with a song.

Hymn 316 verse 1 and 3.

The minister requests the researcher to bless the preacher and his wife and to ask the Lord to provide in their needs.

The choir sings while the people leave the church.

9.9.1.4. Father's Day Service – 17 June 2012

1. Ritual Space

The ritual space is the same as previous visits to the congregation.

2. Ritual Objects

Candles are burning in the liturgical area. Pamphlets with the Father's Day liturgical programme. Chocolates are given to all fathers present.

3. Ritual Time

I arrive at 09h50 and it is very quiet outside the church. It looks like the service has started earlier this morning. The service ends at 10h55.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

When I enter the church the congregation is listening to gospel music and there is a quiet atmosphere

5. Ritual Identity

Before the benediction he gives brief information about their trip the KwaZulu-Natal. They have outreaches in this area and he was invited to attend a function. He confirms that it was a wonderful experience and they had a blessed time.

6. Ritual Action

The Scripture reading is taken from Gen 12:1-7.

Offerings are collected by the Christian Youth Movement (CYM) while the congregation sings chorusers. The organist is absent today. The meditation is done by a pilgrim. She asks the fathers to stand while she wishes them well for Father's Day. She stresses that it is a privilege to be a father. But it also comes with responsibilities. We are not taught at school on how to be a good father. God teaches us – according to Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you."

She tells a story that she heard on the radio. A man comes home and discovers that his wife is missing. He phones everyone he knows to find out where they did not see her. After twenty-four hours he goes to the police and opens a missing person's file. They ask him to make a statement and to give a clear description of his wife. Police officer: "Does she have long or short hair?" The man is not sure.

Police officer: "What is her hair colour?" The man is unsure again.

Police officer: "What is the colour of her eyes?" The man is still unsure.

Police officer: "Is she short, tall, fat or thin?" Again the man is unable to give a straight answer. However, he informs the officer that his wife left with his car. The police officer then asks what type of car it is. The man starts to describe the vehicle in the smallest detail. The congregation burst out laughing!

The preacher indicates that she would like to talk about commitment; the things that I give my time to. We must make sure to whom we belong. In Genesis 12 the Lord says to Abraham "Go from your country, your people and your father's household...". And verse four says "So Abraham went ...". On our wedding day we are not sure where our commitment will lead us. We might encounter difficult times but God gives us grace to be faithful.

Genesis 17:1:

- God comes to us regularly – "walk before me...";
- God wants to tell each father this morning "Walk the road with Jesus";
- "I am God Almighty" – we look at our circumstances but God wants to say "I enable you to walk before me";
- "Walk before God and you are complete" – God looks past our faults and sees a perfect man, a perfect father.
- Today families have to face many challenges. It is not easy to stay standing!

Paul writes to the congregation of Phillipians and asks them to stand firm. The enemy wants to demolish our fathers. Fathers, are you standing before God this morning? Are you standing spiritually?

2 Chronicles 20:17 "...Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you...". Fathers, remain standing and see what I will do. We sometimes make compromises for the sake of peace. But we need to stand before God (Genesis 19), at all times, for the sake of our families. You will experience miracles in your lives and you will experience the presence of God.

Genesis 24:40 "...The LORD, before whom I have walked faithfully...". Walk, stand, go back – then you can claim God's presence. We need God. We may have everything but we need God in our lives. God will make you prosper.

The minister and a congregant join the service at this point.

Walk before God; stand before Him. He will make us prosper. Amen

[Die prediker noem aan die gemeente dat sy graag vanoggend wil praat oor “commitment” – dit waaraan ek my tyd gee. Ons moet seker maak wat ons bymekaar maak – aan wie ons behoort. In Genesis 12 lees ons dat die Here Abraham ‘n opdrag gee om van sy familie af weg te gaan. In vers 4 lees ons dat Abraham weggetrek het.

Op ons troudag weet ons nie op watter paaie ons “commitment” ons gaan neem nie. Ons gaan beslis soms moeilike tye ondervind maar God gee aan ons genade om aan Sy toewyding getrou te wees.

Gen 17:1 – God kom dikwels na ons toe – “wandel voor Sy aangesig”. Sy daag die vaders uit om “saam met die Here te loop”. Ons kyk soms na ons omstandighede maar God wil vir jou sê ek stel jou instaat om saam met God te wandel. God kyk verby ons gebreke en God sien ‘n volmaakte man (Pa). Wandel voor God se aangesig. Dit kos iets om te staan vandag want die uitdagings vir ons en ons gesinne raak al hoe groter.

Paulus skryf vir die gemeente in Fillipense om vas te staan! Die vyand wil ons vaders se voete onder hulle uitslaan! Staan u vanoggend voor die aangesig van die Here? Staan u op geestelike gebied?

2 Kron 20:17 “... staan gereed, bly staan en aanskou die redding wat ek julle gaan gee”. Pa’s, bly staan en aanskou wat Ek gaan doen.

Ons gee partykeer in, maak kompromieë om die vrede te bewaar in ons familie. Ons moet gedurig staan voor God se aangesig (Gen 19) vir ons familie. Dan sal ons wonderwerke sien en God se teenwoordigheid ervaar. Wandel, staan, gaan terug... dan kan ons aanspraak maak op God se teenwoordigheid! Ons het God nodig. Ons kan alles het in hierdie lewe maar ons het God nodig. God sal ons weg voorspoedig maak! Amen]

The Sunday school expresses gratitude to the church council for allowing them to start the service earlier this morning. This gives the families a chance still to have special time with their fathers this morning and to spoil them a little bit. They also extend a word of appreciation to the preacher, as well as everyone who was involved in the programme that morning. The children go to the front for the spiritual dancing.

I am approached by members of the Sunday school in the foyer. They are happy that I joined them this morning and they also gave me a Father’s Day gift for my husband.

9.9.1.5. Holy Communion Service by researcher – 22 July 2012

I have asked a friend to take notes during this service. She will also help with the questionnaires at the end of the service. I received a message on my phone early in the morning – it was actually sent the Saturday evening but I switched my phone off and therefore only saw it early in the morning. The minister informed me that there will be guests from Germany in the service and he would appreciate it if I could have my sermon in English, or at least, most of it in English so that they can also follow. I decided to translate the sermon impromptu since there is no time for a full translation anymore.

The church is not so full. There are about 40 adults, 40-50 children and 25-30 young people. There are also a few visitors from Germany.

There are 110 people according to the records of the church council.

It is good that the hymns are also in English. It allows everyone to join in. The minister welcomes everyone. A special word of welcome is extended to the guests from Germany. He mentions Henri Nouwen's definition of hospitality "creating a space where change can take place".

Congratulations are extended to everyone who celebrated their birthdays during the week. He also sympathises with families who lost loved ones. He stresses that in church God gives us a space to share the good and the bad with each other.

The researcher continues with the service and starts off by explaining briefly what the research is all about. She reads two statements:

1. If the church wants to be relevant in the lives of her members today, she might need to revisit and reclaim the process of lament in liturgy. Re-thinking and re-introducing lament in liturgy could have far-reaching and enriching implications in the lives of congregants, especially where healing of memories is concerned;
2. Given the challenging times that we live in, in what way could a re-discovery or a re-claiming of lament in liturgy, against the background of healing and hope, assume new meaning in our congregations?

At the words “lament” quite a few blank expressions are observed. After more explanation people start to confirm with headshakes that they are aware what the researcher is referring to. Lament asks for a space in church to cry unto the Lord.

The researcher invites the congregants to take part in a practical manner this morning. People seem very skeptical after this invitation. Some even look unfriendly.

The church choir sings “In U hande lê ek my neer”. During the sermon people are listening attentively. Some look genuinely interested. The children look bored and some of them are restless and fidgeting. The extent of the fidgeting is a bit unusual.

The researcher is a good orator. Her voice is inviting. She speaks clearly, loudly and firmly and her vocabulary is also good.

When the researcher indicates that the Psalmist hands his petition to the very “absent” God there is an uncomfortable silence. This uncomfortable silence continues during the exegesis of lament and throughout the service. Existential lines are drawn – murder, rape, hunger. We don’t want to get involved. We are apathetic towards those who are suffering. The researcher draws lines between the Holy Communion and our own suffering. There is very little reaction from the congregation. During the prayer people seem to relax a bit.

The practical part of the sermon flows very nicely. However, people are reluctant to volunteer to participate. They come to the front only after the third invitation.

People are asked to taste a liquid. It has a salty taste. Does not taste good and the participants are making faces. A comforting atmosphere is now present after this tasting experience. The salt is indicative of the hardships that we encounter during our lives.

After the tasting of the salty water a prayer of lament is done.

A candle is lit by each representative. This act confirms that despite the “darkness” that we sometimes experience in our lives, God is our hope and comfort. *There is quite a bit of fidgeting.*

The participants now get a chance to taste honey. It symbolizes the sweet experiences that we do have in our lives, despite the heartaches that we experience.

The researcher now consecrates olive oil and uses it to anoint the participants. *Some people in the pews are moaning, they seem to be very sceptical.* The researcher asks the minister to join her in anointing the participants. *Two participants break down in tears when they are anointed. One of them has recently lost his wife and is still coming to terms with her death.*

Songs of praise are done after the anointing. Children are still fidgeting and looking around quite a bit.

9.9.1.6. Service dedicated to the children- 16 September 2012

1. Ritual Space

It is a beautiful day. The sun is shining and it is 18°C. The Catechism class is conducted outside the church. The children and the teacher are sitting in a circle and are in deep discussion. The caretaker is sweeping in front of the church. Catechism classes are wrapping up in preparation for the service that starts at 10h00.

Only two vehicles are parked in front of the church. This could be because most people live within walking distance from the church. I am greeted at the church entrance by a church council member. We talk about pleasantries for about five minutes. He informs me that the minister is sick this morning and asks me to do a prayer, as well as the benediction, in the course of the service. He also tells me that one of their dreams is to start a praise and worship group in the church. However, they are struggling to get it off the ground.

2. Ritual Objects

The liturgical area looks beautiful with colourful flowers (proteas, etc.).

Banners in front say “Akkerpret in Bybelpark”. The banners are colourful. There are three smiling cartoon faces painted on it.

3. Ritual Time

I arrived at 09h30. The service ends at 11h35.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

When I enter the church I see that the spiritual dancing group is putting final touches to their dance routine. The music for their dancing routine is playing, but not too loudly.

5. Ritual Identity

At 09h45 a few older members have taken their seats. Children are still in the catechism classes. The church now fills up quickly and at 09h55 it is almost filled to capacity. People are talking lively, greeting each other. A friendly and warm atmosphere prevails. The children are taking the lead in singing. Most of them are sitting in the “left wing” at the front of the pulpit. The singing is done with actions and the whole congregation enjoys this tremendously.

At 10h00 the church council members enter and everyone stands. Opening hymn “Ons is almal nou hier saam (*We are all gathered here*)”. Announcements are done by a church council member. The preacher is welcomed. She is from Bible Media.

6. Ritual Action

Votum en blessing are done by the researcher.

The dance group then gets a chance to do a performance. There is an element of lament and hope in the words of the song. Some of the lyrics go as follows:

*“... Heart filled with sorrow and despair
I will carry you, you’ll find
My footprints in the sand
I promise you, I’m always there ...”*

The congregation show their appreciation by clapping hands. After this dance item the Sunday school children also sang a song “As Hy weer kom, kom haal hy sy pêrels (*When He comes again He will fetch His pearls*)”. Some kids look very shy and tense, but mostly they look comfortable. There are several smiling faces. The congregation does not clap hands after the song.. *I wonder why?*

Offerings are collected by the children.

At 10h40 the message is delivered. The focus is on 3-8 year olds. There is an atmosphere of expectancy in the air. And the children are very excited.

Question to the children: [*“Hoe voel jy as iemand jou bang maak?”*]/ How do you feel when someone frightens you?

A song follows to help them with the answer.

[*“As iemand jou bang maak,”*]/ When someone frightens you

[*As iemand jou seer maak*] / when someone hurts you

[*As iemand nie doen wat hy sê nie*] / when someone does not keep their word

[*Dan voel ek so warm, my hart klop so vinnig*] / then I feel warm and my heart beats faster

[*En kwaad kom so donker op my lê*] / and I become so very angry.

Answer to the question: [*Ons harte raak donker*]/Our hearts grow dark.

The song continues...

[*“God se son skyn elke dag*] / God’s son shines every day

[*Op elke een van ons*] / on each one of us

[*Dit bring nuwe lewe*] / it brings new life

[*Dat ons ook kan vergeve*”]/ so that we can also forgive.

Question: [*Wat kan ‘n mens met oop arms doen?*]/What can you do when your arms are open?

The children answer: “we can hug each other”. Everyone sings the song again with actions.

The children really enjoy this. After the song we go for a visit in the Bible Park. Grandfather Owl comes to visit us. The preacher takes out an owl puppet behind the pulpit. Frikkie and Frederick, two squirrels, also come to visit. The preacher uses the puppets and songs to convey the message. The focus message is: “You are special, made for a specific purpose. See yourself the same way that God sees you”. Mark the skunk also lives in Bible Park. But no one wants to play with him.

Scripture reading: Isaiah 43:1 “...I have summoned you by your name, you are mine...”.

Peppie also comes to play. The children have lively chats with all the residents of Bible Park. The visit ends at 11h30 with a song [*“Bly maar net vertrou*]/Keep on trusting”.

Words of gratitude

Closing Hymn

The benediction is done by the researcher.

In most cases there is a friendly atmosphere in this congregation. People are relaxed and one can observe that these congregants are like one big family. Today was no different. The children were so excited with their visit to the Bible Park. The excitement could even be seen on the faces of the grown-ups as well. Everyone enjoyed the service tremendously.

9.9.1.7. Sunday morning service - 07 October 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive at the church at 09h50. The air is quite fresh and it looks as if it has been raining in the mountains during the night. There are several vehicles parked in front of the church. Upon entering I am greeted by a church council member. Young people are standing in front, singing. The liturgical area is full of flower bouquets. It looks as if there was a celebration of some sorts in the building over the weekend. Two of the wings in the hall are still empty. There is a good mixture of young and older people present. The congregation sings beautifully this morning

2. Ritual Objects

A data projector is used this morning. It appears that the liturgy will be displayed via the data projector. *This is the first time that I experience the use of technology in this way in this congregation.* Normally it is only the hymns that are displayed.

3. Ritual Time

The church council and minister enter at 10h04 and the service starts formally with the singing of "Our Father". Service ends at 11h25.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The congregation uses the official hymn book and also sings choruses.

5. Ritual Identity

The young people are taking the lead in singing this morning. The words of the songs are displayed via a data projector. The congregation is singing along. There is a lively atmosphere in the church.

6. Ritual Action

A welcome message is displayed with a picture of the church and the mountain in the background. The announcements are done by the scribe. The scribe thanks the ward who arranged the beautiful flowers. A word of welcome is extended to everyone. Those who have celebrated their birthdays, or any other joyous occasion are asked to come to the front. They are congratulated with the words of Isaiah 43. The minister takes over and also extends a word of welcome to the researcher. He then reminds everyone that we are in the 19th season of Kingdomtide. He poses the following question “How do people know that we are Christians?”

Votum : “Let us shout for joy, let us exalt the name of our Lord” [*Laat ons jubel, laat ons tot eer van die Here juig*].

Benediction: “Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ” [*Genade, barmhartigheid en vrede vir u van God onse Vader deur Jesus Christus ons Heer*].

The congregation is invited to sing together “Yesterday, today, forever – Jesus is the same (Hymn 56)”. The church choir then ministers to the congregation “Hy lei my voort/*He leads me*”.

The theme of the service is “How do people know that you are a Christian?”. People should recognize us as being Christians. [*Tema: Hoe weet mense dat jy ‘n Christen is? Mense moet ons uitken.*]

The service of humility is done with a responsive reading. *The words are a bit small on the display area, but the congregation follows and takes part.*

- 1 John 1:7-9, Romans 6:23
- Hymn 241 verse 1 - Amazing Grace
- Galatians 5 (let the Spirit guide our behaviour)
- Confession of faith. It is followed by hymn 240

Meditation:

The Scripture reading is done by one of the young people – 1 Thessalonica 1:1-10, with the focus on verse 6. The minister then prays. *There are traces of lament in his prayer but it is mostly a prayer of thanksgiving.*

- Paul asks how we are identified as being a Christian. Our behaviour. People should know us through our behaviour. Paul writes this letter to the Thessalonians sixteen years after his conversion. Thessalonica is described as a city; a safe harbour town where people valued paying their taxes. Paul was of mixed descent. He preaches the Word and people repent. Can people recognize us as followers of Christ? Don't ask someone if they are believers, rather observe how they live their lives. 70% of South Africans are Christians. So people should see through our example that we are Christians. Are people drawn towards the cross through our examples? [*Paulus wil weet waaraan ons as Christene geken word. Aan ons gedrag! Mense moet ons ken aan ons voorbeelde. 16 jaar na sy bekering skryf Paulus die brief aan Thessalonika. Thessalonika as stad was 'n veilige hawe, mense was gesteld op belasting. Paulus was van 'n gemengde afkoms, hy bedien die Woord en mense kom tot bekering. Kan mense ons herken, soos vir Paulus, dat ons volgelingen van Christus is? Moenie 'n mens vra of hy glo nie, kyk eerder hoe hy sy geloof uitleef. Kyk na wat mense doen! Daar is 70% Christene in Suid-Afrika. Is God se beeld so ingeslaan in ons dat mense na God getrek word?*]

- Paul had to set an example throughout difficult circumstances. Their faith could have landed them in prison. And it did! [*Paulus-hulle moes hierdie beeld uitdra tydens moeilike omstandighede. Hulle geloof kon hulle in die tronk laat beland. En dit het ook!*]

- Results of a good example:

- You must live your faith [*Christenskap moet gelewe word*]

- The prince and the pauper (illustration through narrative). A prince and a pauper looked identical. They switch places at a ball but things go wrong and the prince is thrown into jail and then ultimately onto the street. The prince tries to convince people that he is actually the real prince and that there is an imposter in the palace. However, people do not want to believe him. At the end of the day, people started to become suspicious because of the actions of the prince and the pauper. They realize that the "prince" in the palace is actually an imposter. The real prince is taken back into the palace and his status is restored.

- This is how our example should convince people that we are indeed Christians

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- The sermon concludes with a narrative:

- A little boy follows his mother everywhere. She asks him to play outside because he is constantly under her feet. But he refuses. After a while the mother asks him why he is

following her constantly. He responds: “Mom, teacher said we must follow the footsteps of Jesus. But I can’t see Jesus. But you I can see. So that is why I decided to follow Mom’s footsteps”.

- Children should get a clear example from their parents how to follow Jesus.
 - God expects from us to live in such a way that people would want to follow Him!
- Amen.

The minister offers a prayer and asks the choir to sing. They sing “*Wie het ek buiten U in die hemel*”.

The congregation is relaxed throughout the sermon, including the children.

The offerings are collected by the deacons while the congregation sings. The offerings are blessed by one of the deacons.

Closing hymn - Hymn 385

The priestly blessing is done as benediction

People are chatting with each other while they are exiting the church. Some of them continue their conversations under the trees. A very comfortable atmosphere exists amongst them. One can see that it is a very closely-knit faith community. People also approach me and asked how I am doing and how the studies are going. They also want to know if my family is well.

9.9.1.8. Informal interview with the minister - 10 October 2012

Vraag: Hoe lank is jy nou al in die gemeente?⁵¹⁰

Antwoord: 6.5 jaar

Vraag: Ek het die paar Sondae wat ek die erediens bygewoon het, gesien dat die opkoms nogal bietjie gedaal het.

Antwoord: Daar is ‘n definitiewe afname. Sekere dienste word goed bygewoon. By ons dankofferdiens, wat ‘n groot diens is, is daar gewoonlik nie plek nie. So daar is definitief in afname in die bywoning.

⁵¹⁰ This interview took place in Stellenbosch and was conducted in Afrikaans.

Vraag: Ek het 'n baie mooi ervaring gehad tydens die navorsingspreek. Dit het my regtig baie geraak. Ek het nie gedink die praktiese gedeelte van die liturgie sou so verloop nie. maar dis seker maar soos die Heilige Gees ook werk; dat die mense wat die oggend vorentoe gekom het om deel te neem toe ook die mense is wat regtig deur diep waters gaan op die oomblik. T.o.v. lament in liturgie – ek het opgetel dat die gemeente baie relaxed is in die sin dat daar ruimte geskep word. Soos bv die kinders word baie geakkommodeer. Akkommodeer is eintlik die verkeerde woord. Daar is 'n spontaniteit wanneer daar 'n kinderdiens is. Ek het twee kinderdiens bygewoon. En by beide geleenthede was daar 'n liefdevolle atmosfeer wat geheers het vir die kinders. In terme van lament; ek het anderkeer vir jou genoem dat my navorsing nie net oor klagte gaan nie. Ek wil kyk na lament met 'n fokus op heling en hoop. Wat ek agtergekom het by julle is dat lament meestal voorkom in gebede. Daar is egter nie momente in die erediens wat daarvoor geskep word nie. Ek sou dink dat dit seker maar deel van ons tradisie is dat mense makliker hulle harte teenoor die Here uitstort in gebed. Is dit dalk ook jou ervaring?

Antwoord: Dit is so. Ons het byvoorbeeld 'n ouderling gevra om spesifiek te bid vir mense wat siek is of deur 'n moeilike tyd gaan. Dan kan 'n mens agterkom wat dit vir mense beteken. Maar bv die kerkseisoen; in die Paastyd laat ek hulle 'n kers aansteek. Dan weer in die Adventseisoen. Doopsondae – wat ons een keer 'n kwartaal doen – laat ek die doopouers die kers aansteek. Maar ek dink dis 'n goeie waarneming dat mense absoluut gebed beskou as die geleentheid om te lament – dat hulle veilig genoeg voel om die klag by die Here te registreer.

Aanmerking van navorser: Mense is eintlik baie verward. Ek kon dit sien die oggend toe ek gepreek het. Jy kan sien mense stem saam wanneer jy iets oor lament sees, amper asof hulle wil sê “Ja ek het ook altyd so daarvoor gedink of gevoel”. Die manier waarop mense beaam wanneer ek iets sê. Ek kom agter in die bruin gemeentes dat dit meer in individuele gebede is dat lament na vore kom. Mense bring dit bv. nie in op die vlak van die nagmaalstafel nie. Dis asof mense dit weet maar tog nog steeds nie die connection maak nie. In terme van die gebrokenheid van Jesus en die heling van Jesus – dat dit tog ook saamgaan met die lament. Maar in die Xhosa-sprekende gemeentes bv. is dit weer 'n hele kopswaai. Jy weet bv. dat wanneer ons 'n uitnodiging rig vir gebed dan moet 'n mens mos gewoonlik 'n paar keer

nooi voordat iemand opstaan en begin bid. By die Xhosa-sprekende gemeentes gee hulle mekaar nie kans nie. Na die preek gee die predikant geleentheid vir gebed. Hulle het ook bv. call-outs op 'n Sondagoggend. Dan kom die hele gemeente vorentoe en daar word vir elke een gebed na aanleiding van die nood wat hulle deel met die predikant. So tel ek op dat die “huil” voor die Here baie meer spontaan voorkom in ons swart gemeentes. Dis maar wat ek nou opgetel het in die paar besoeke wat ek gebring het aan die verskillende gemeentes.

Vraag van predikant: Hoeveel Xhosa gemeentes doen jy?

Ek doen op die oomblik net een gemeente, vir X. Ek doen 3 ander gemeentes ook. Daar was ander gemeentes wat ons ook genader het maar ongelukkig het die administrasie bietjie lank geneem. En my supervisor het ook gevoel ons moenie te veel gemeentes doen nie omdat ons net 'n general trend wil sien. Ons wil darem nie jare die empiriese navorsing doen nie. Ons wil net die vloei sien, wat gebeur en waar daar verandering ingebring kan word.

Vraag: So dit wat ek in julle gemeente ervaar het is dat lamente meestal voorkom in die gebed. Maar van jou viewpoint – dink jy ons as leiers, is dit nou maar as gevolg van ons leiding – die manier hoe ons oor lamente dink, dat ons dit nie regtig deel maak van ons dienste nie? Obviously as jy 'n begrafnis diens doen sal daar tog iewers in die liturgie 'n deel wees waar jy plek maak vir lamente. Maar ons ander dienste, soos doop – soos wat jy gesê het, julle lamente oor dit wat die ouers deurgaan. Soos jou nagmaal, soos jou troue. Ons lê nie baie klem op lamente nie. Ons beweeg baie vinnig na praise en worship; ons as leiers. Kan dit dalk die rede wees hoekom lamente, in ons gemeentes spesifiek, nie regtig feature nie; omdat ons wil hê mense moet vergeet, “so to speak” van hulle swaarkry wanneer hulle in die kerk kom. En ons die boodskap wil gee dat die Here goed is, maak nie saak wat jou omstandighede nie Hy sal jou daardeur help. Maar ons gee nie die mense kans om vir 'n oomblik eintlik na te dink oor hulle omstandighede en dan die stappe verder te vat voordat ons by praise en worship kom. As ons begin met ons erediens dan het ons 'n praise en worship team. Ons praise en worship heeltyd. En so 'n paar minute voordat predikant en kerkraad inkom gaan ons oor in aanbidding. So jy kom in die kerk in binne 'n praise en

worship atmosfeer en dan gaan jy onmiddelik in 'n aanbiddingsatmosfeer. Daar is nie tyd vir lament nie. Dit lyk asof ons net in twee spesifieke fases werk. Party mense voel jy moenie kla nie.

Antwoord: Ek dink ons moet mense aanmoedig om te verstaan dat dit ok is, dis oraait om met vreugde na die Here te kom, maar ook te kom met my pyn en my seer, of met iets waaroor ek in opstand gekom het. So persoonlik dink ek, dit wat die leier ervaar deur die week tydens pastorale versorging speel 'n groot rol. Ek self is dan ook geneig om dit te connect aan die Sondag se preek. Dit wat in die week in die gemeente konteks en in die breë gemeenskap gebeur. Daar is mos nou baie Sondae wat jy nie daar is nie waar daar momente ingebou word. Kyk bv. daar het 'n meisie van 14 selfmoord gepleeg in ons gemeenskap. Ons gemeente staan nie in isolasie nie, sy is nie in ons kerk nie maar sy is deel van die gemeenskap. Die kinders wat saam met haar skool gegaan het, wat vriende was met haarselfs die ouers wat nou met die vraag sit "wat van my kind?" Daardie tipe momente bou ek in die erediens in. Ons het nie praise en worship op die oomblik nie, maar ek het 'n paar weke terug 'n uitnodiging gerig aan die jongmense. Ons moet ook sulke geleenthede skep vir ons jong mense. Ons mense kom met verskillende gemoedere by die kerk. So ek laat my maar lei deur die Gees van die Here. Dit het al gebeur dat ek my preek op 'n Saterdag nag verander, omdat iets net kliek. Dan rig ek maar die liturgie daar rondom. Jy het seker ook gesien dat ons gemeente nie 'n streng liturgiese orde het nie omdat ek glo 'n mens moet jouself oopstel vir die verassingsmoment van die Here in die erediens – en dit begin by my as leier. 'n Lidmaat het bv. vir ons 'n kersstaander geskenk en vra toe om iets te sê na aanleiding van die pad wat ek met hom gestap het. Net om met die gemeente te deel dat hy HIV positief is. Ek het dit nie geweet nie. En hier breek hy die ys, in die gemeenskap van gelowiges. Dis 'n oggend wat ek nooit sal vergeet nie. Dis sulke momente wat ek teen my bors vasdruk. Dat iemand veilig genoeg voel binne daai ruimte om dit te kan doen; ongeag die vrese vir veroordeling.

Ons praat nog verder oor die feit dat daar nou redelik van tegnologie gebruik gemaak word tydens die preek.

Ek glo ons leiers kan 'n groot rol speel om sulke sensitiewe momente uit te bou.

Vraag: Dis ook iets wat ek opgetel het na aanleiding van die “safe space” waarvan jy gepraat het. Wat ek observe het is ‘n mens kan regtig sien mense voel tuis. Mense voel tuis in die gemeente en dis vir hulle ‘n geestelike huis. Dis wat my altyd so gepla het van sommige van ons gemeentes. Soos hierdie persoon wat nou disclose het – baie van die leiers weet nie hoe om die moment te hanteer nie. en dan gaan hulle net aan met die volgende punt op die liturgie. En dit is wat my altyd so ontstel het. Daar kan nie vir ‘n moment stil gestaan word by hierdie persoon, wat nou ‘n breakdown het, wat besig is om te huil – ons moet aangaan want die kerk is net vir ‘n uur. En dis wat vir my so wonderlik was. Dis dieselfde wat gebeur het die oggend toe ons die navorsingspreek gehad het. Dis seker maar soos die Gees van die Here werk dat jy op daai stadium, jy het mos die man gesalf. En tussen hom en die volgende persoon – toe hy die breakdown het – toe kon ek wag, rustig – en toelaat dat jy hom self en tyd met hom spandeer en toe verder kon aangaan.

Antwoord: Dit was ‘n besonderse moment in die gemeente. Almal het geweet hy het sopas sy vrou verloor en sy hele familie het daar gesit.

Narvorser: Tydens die preek kon ek sien die man is onder diepe oortuiging. Hy knik sy kop, etc.

Vraag: Dit was mos nou al ‘n hele ruk terug dat ek my proposal na julle gestuur het. Ek wil graag jou persoonlike mening kry. Ek sê die uitdagings waarin ons vandag lewe – dis nie dat lament nie daar was nie. Ons het net ‘n rediscovery daarvan nodig. A re-discovery en a re-claiming van lament binne ons liturgie. Teen die agtergrond van heling en hoop. Dit kan betekenisvol in ons gemeentes wees as ons die re-claiming en re-discovery re-introduce in van ons spesifieke dienste. Wat is jou gevoel daaromtrent.

Antwoord: Ek dink dis eintlik ononderhandelbaar. Dit moet gebeur. Dit is teenwoordig. Dit moet dalk net meer bewustelik plaasvind. Dit gebeur soms baie indirek. Ek sou sê ‘n mens moet meer daai direkte momente skep sodat mense bewustelik weet dat hulle die geleentheid kan benut om my klag voor die Here te bring. Op die oomblik dink ek doen ons dit op ‘n indirekte wyse, sonder om dit direk uit te spel en mense bewus te maak dat

ons in 'n moment is waar ons openlik kan kla teenoor God. Maar ook nie net die klag nie. Mense kom mos nou met verskillende behoeftes – en ek dink dis die challenge van die erediens. As mens bewustelik momente skep, ek gebruik bv die doopdiens, dan moet mens saam met daai bewustelike skep van momente in die erediens ook kyk na wat kan gebeur na daai moment. Die persoon gee 'n persoonlike ervaring maar dan eindig dit daar in die erediens. Ons het nie 'n struktuur in plek waar hy opgevang kan word nie, bv. mense wat toegerus is om 'n pad met die persoon te stap nie. Hoe kan daar 'n na-sorg in plek gestel word wat mense verder kan help en 'n pad met hulle kan stap?

Ons gesels nog in general. Hy noem dat ons uit ons gemaksones beweeg en onself moet oopstel vir vernuwing. Daarna groet hy om sy kinders by die skool te gaan haal.

9.9.2. Uniting Reformed Church – Y

9.9.2.1. Sunday morning service - 26 February 2012

This is my first visit to the congregation⁵¹¹ this year. I was scheduled to attend the Holy Communion service on 12th February 2012 but owing to illness was unable to make it. I am not a stranger in this congregation. I was privileged to do my licentiate year in the congregation a few years ago under the supervision of one of the ministers. I therefore need to take into consideration that I might be biased in certain instances. Against this background I need to make a few remarks concerning the congregation:

- 1. The researcher knows one of the ministers personally.*
- 2. During previous contact with the congregation, the idea was formed that this was a very conservative group of people – set in their ways, so to speak.*
- 3. The researcher is also a part-time minister in the Uniting Reformed Church and is not a stranger to the liturgies.*
- 4. The congregation speaks mainly Afrikaans.*

1. Ritual Space

⁵¹¹The researcher has been trying to get the 2012 statistical information for this congregation for some time now but without any success. This would have provided some sort of a picture of what the congregation looks like.

I know my way around the church building and immediately proceed to the vestry. Upon arrival, I find two church council members. They greet me in a very friendly manner and introduced themselves to me. While I take a seat I quickly scan the vestry. There is a table in the centre as well as one in the corner, opposite the backdoor. Both tables are covered with table cloths. There is also a notice board on the wall with information posted on it. Next to the pew is a wooden box. It has a silver plate with the following words “Geskenk deur br & sr AJ Steenkamp 1973”⁵¹². It looks like a box which is used for offerings. The two church council members are making smalltalk while waiting for the others. The one member tells us about earlier days when the church council members would have an early prayer session on the first Sunday of the month, at 06h00 in the morning. He misses this tradition and wonders aloud why it does not happen anymore.

The elder-in-charge reminds everyone that it is almost 10h30 and that we should move inside. One of the church council members prays first before we go inside the church. *I see that they do not have a short meditation session before entering the church.*

2. Ritual Objects

The news bulletin. This bulletin is printed and distributed on a weekly basis. It provides information about the weekly activities of the congregation. Bibles and hymn books. The researcher’s own observations with the help of all senses, mainly visually and auditory.

The building has adequate lighting and most of the windows are open. The floor has wall-to-wall carpets. The room can be split into two by a room divider. The first half of the room has wooden pews while the second half has loose chairs which are stacked cinema-style. *It looks as if the second part could be a newer extension. I will ask the minister about this.*

The church choir sits in front, to the left of the pulpit and the church council members are seated on the right. The pulpit is centre stage and in front there are two flower arrangements on either side of it. There are also two potplants placed strategically in front of the pulpit. The control box of the sound system is also in front. On the wall, behind the pulpit, hangs a white cloth (with some artwork) with a cross and a big red HIV-ribbon around it. This is the only sign of a cross in the liturgical area. A step separates the stage

⁵¹² Translated it would read “Donated by br & sr AJ Steenkamp 1973”

and the front of the church. In front, between the choir and the church council members is a huge table. *I know that this table is used during Holy Communion.* The table is empty. It has a maroon tablecloth and on top of that a small white cloth.

3. Ritual Time

I arrive at the church 10h15. Church starts at 10h30 and ends at 12h10. Tropical storm Irina hits KZN.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The language of communication is Afrikaans. Notes were taken in English but a summary of the meditation will be given in Afrikaans.

5. Ritual Identity

I observe that there are ten male and two female church council members at this service. I make a mental note that I should ask the minister about this. Is this the number or are there just many people absent at today's service?

Everyone is dressed very neatly in black and white. The men are dressed in black suits, white shirts and white ties. Some of them are wearing ties with the church's emblem. The women are dressed in black skirts and white shirts. The minister is dressed in a black suit, white shirt and a white tie. He also has a beaded HIV-bow on his left shoulder. His facial expression is very calm and friendly. The minister makes a few general announcements when everyone is present. He then introduces me to everyone and reminds them about the research that I will be conducting in the congregation.

I observe that a few older women are wearing stylish hats while the older men are wearing black suits. The younger men are all wearing shirts without jackets. Some are wearing ties and others just have a cardigan on.

6. Ritual Action

The minister goes through a different door that leads to the pulpit. The rest of the church council members, including myself, enter through a stage door into the church building. When the minister enters, the whole congregation stands and continues with the song that

they are singing. The minister welcomes everyone present and starts immediately with the announcements. He looks very comfortable on the pulpit. *He is not wearing a toga. Maybe it is because he is not the one preaching today.* He informs the congregation that we are waiting on the preacher as he still had a few things to attend to at the previous gathering⁵¹³.

During the announcements, a small dog runs to the front of the stage. He looks very friendly and sniffs at everything, especially the flowers. A small girl in the front row enjoys the dog's presence and she laughs happily while eating her chips. There is no children's room in the building so the voices of children are always in the background. The congregants have very serious expressions on their faces while listening to the minister. Attention is brought to some issues that are on the news bulletin.

The minister also introduces me as a researcher and reminds the congregation about the research that will be done during the year. He asks them to feel free to assist me with whatever information I might need. The church council member next to me gives me a firm handshake, once again, as a welcoming gesture. *I see the little dog is still running around and enjoying the freedom.* The minister continues with the announcements. He asks people who are celebrating their birthdays and wedding anniversaries to stand so that he can congratulate them.

He then struggles with the microphone that is not located properly and one of the church council members promptly walks to the front and gives him a hand. He talks briefly about the importance of celebrating a birthday and asks the congregants who are seated next to the people who are standing to give them a warm handshake. He then also informs the congregation about those who are sick at home. *The dog is in front again. This time, an elderly man is really not happy and he looks at the dog with a frown on his face, clearly showing that he is not happy with the dog's presence in the church building.* The minister also informs the congregation about a funeral that he conducted the previous day. He also had the opportunity to marry the man, about eighteen years ago, and he was now comforting the widow. He reminds her about how she cried on her wedding day and that he alludes to

⁵¹³ This church has two prayer meetings on a Sunday, in different church buildings.

the fact that a handkerchief would not be big enough and she might need to get a towel. Now that she is burying her husband, she might need a sheet. *The minister obviously had a good relationship with this family to be able to crack a joke like this.* The minister and the congregation laugh at the story and the mood seems to be lighter.

He then asks the congregation to pray with him while remembering what Jesus sacrificed for us on the cross. What could we sacrifice in the forty days to assist us to focus our energies anew on Jesus Christ? Maybe we choose to make more time to read our Bibles and to pray? What will each one of us sacrifice and what will we do that is new? He asks the congregation to focus on these questions while we also keep in mind the road that Jesus travelled in order for us to be free. [*“Daar is die Lam van God wat die sonde van die wêreld weggeneem het”.*]

Song of Praise : Hymn 45 verses 1 and 2 in our hymn book⁵¹⁴. After the song of praise another hymn (nr 203) is sung and offerings are collected. The congregation sings very well under the guidance of the organ.

There is no air conditioner in the church and people are feeling a bit warm. Some of them are fanning themselves with their hymn book. People are sitting in a mixed fashion. It is difficult to see whether families are seated together.

After the collection one of the church council members gives a prayer of thanks for all the blessings bestowed on us. When we take our seats again the church council member who sits next to me warns me to be careful because the pew pinches a bit. I thank him for the warning.

The preacher of the day has arrived. The minister acknowledged his presence, as well as the presence of his family. A dove comes into the building and looks for a place to rest. The minister smiles and says that the dove symbolizes peace. After a few words of welcome he leaves the pulpit. The preacher greets the congregation and immediately announces that we are ready for the service of the Word. He asks everyone to open their

⁵¹⁴ Nuwe Sionsgesangboek

Bibles so that we can read from John 15:1-8. He asks the church choir to sing a hymn to the glory of God before we do the Scripture reading. The choir sings “Holy Spirit come in”. I notice that there are no young people in the choir.

Do the young people think that this organization in the church is only for the elderly?

Some of the congregants say “amen” after the choir has sung to show their appreciation for the song. People also don’t look uncomfortable when some clap hands in appreciation of what is being sung or if people say “amen” now and again. It looks as if they are quite comfortable with this behaviour even though on face value the congregation seems to be a traditional one.

Meditation:

The preacher first gives a brief introduction on the background of the selected Scripture portion. Jesus talks to His disciples and it is basically his farewell speech. He further alludes to the fact that the message of Jesus also touches him very deeply. He then reads the Scripture portion. *A baby starts to cry inconsolably and a lady takes the child outside.* The preacher keeps on reading. After the Scripture reading he asks the choir to serve us with a song again. They sing “I will lift mine eyes”.

[Agtergrond: Jesus praat met sy dissipels – afskeidswoorde. Hierdie boodskap laat ook die prediker se hart klop omdat dit ook sy laaste preek in die gemeente is.]

As introduction to his sermon, the preacher gives a brief overview of how he ended up studying theology. He talks about how his relationship with God deepened over the years and how the Scripture reading also talks about relationships.

[Preacher gave a brief background about his journey into theology. Die kern vir hom was nog altyd verhoudings.]

The verses about the vineyard also look at how we stand in a relationship with God and God with us. God is depicted as a farmer – as the owner of the vineyard. If the vineyard does not produce fruit the branches are pruned. Jesus is the grapevine. In order to produce fruit every shoot should be anchored in the grapevine, i.e. in Jesus because He is our life source. We are being depicted as the branches that should be anchored in the grapevine.

What should a shoot do in order to produce much fruit? It should stay part of the grapevine. What does Jesus want to tell His disciples? Abide in me! The Greek translation explains this as living in a house where you feel safe. Jesus will provide us with safety. So we should basically be in a relationship with God. If a shoot does not stay anchored in the grapevine it will not produce fruit. Jesus said “without me you can do nothing”. Do not drift away from me – to seek shelter with Jesus is by far the best.

[Hierdie teks van die wingerd wil aan ons wys hoe God in verhouding met ons staan. God word uitgebeeld as 'n landbouer; 'n eienaar van die wingerd. As die wingerd nie vrugte dra nie word dit gesnoei. Jesus is die wingerdstok en die lote moet vasgekleef wees aan Hom sodat dit vrugte kan dra. Jesus is ons “life-source”. Jesus wil vir sy dissipels sê “bly in my”. Griekse woord beskryf dit soos om in 'n huis te woon, daar waar ons veilig voel. Jesus sal ons huisves. Ons staan dus in 'n verhouding met God. As lote nie vaskleef aan die wingerdstok nie kan hulle nie vrug dra nie. Jesus sê ons kan niks sonder hom doen nie. Moenie van My wegdryf nie. Om by God te skuil is verreweg die beste.]

The Scripture portion is reminding us that we are dependent on God for our very being. We need to realize that we are dependent on Him to provide in all our needs. The core theme of this Scripture reading is “relationships”! We must abide in Christ. What happens when people abide in Christ? Their lives change. What happens when we have a healthy relationship with God? Our lives produce healthy fruit. If you have an intimate relationship with God then your life should reflect it. Your aggression should subside! *The congregation affirms this with an audible “amen”. People are now sitting on the edges of their seats, and they look very interested in what the preacher is going to say next.*

[Ons is afhanklik van God. We must abide in God. Wat gebeur wanneer mense “abide” in God? Hulle lewens verander. Wat gebeur wanneer ons 'n gesonde verhouding met God het? Dan produseer ons lewens gesonde vrugte. As jy 'n intieme verhouding met God het dan moet jou lewe dit reflekteer – agressie moet “subside”]

Those who do not produce fruit are gathered and thrown into the fire – they are burnt. Such a person is separated from Christ and cannot do anything for Him anymore. If we abide in Christ then our lives should show it. It should show in the way that we listen to

others, in how we study the Word of God, in our actions, in how we see each other, in how we deal with conflict! People are nodding to show that they agree with these statements. We cannot be 007-Christians! We must produce visible fruit. In Matthew 7 we read that a tree will be known by the fruit that it produces. How do we know that someone is abiding in Christ? Look at the fruit that the person produces. It is easy to preach about this, but to live it?

When we are confronted with difficult situations, it is then that we have to show the fruit that we have produced. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read about the fruits of the Spirit. It says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Preacher moves comfortably between English and Afrikaans.

Hierdie gemeente het “kindness” en julle is “generous”. I have experienced this over the past couple of years. You are passionate in your relationship with the Lord. *Ek los julle met die volgende woorde: “Abide in the Lord because without Him you are not able to do anything! Wees lief vir mekaar! God verwag dit van ons. Om by God te skuil is die beste plek vir heling. God kan jou lewe verander. Amen”.*

The preacher asks all the young people and children in the church to stand so that he can pray for them. He refers to the fact that in the Old Testament the laying-on of hands was synonymous with bestowing a blessing. He informs the young people and children that he will now stretch out his hands towards them, as a sign of blessing, while he prays for them. He includes the rest of the congregation in his prayer.

The sermon concludes with a final song from the preacher and his wife. They sing without instrumental guidance. This was his final sermon in this congregation and people were quite emotional. A few young people recorded this song on their cameras and the tears

were flowing freely. People were clapping hands in appreciation after they had sung. The words⁵¹⁵ of the song are as follow:

Vader u hart is in my
 U liefde is dieper as my diepste seer
 U genade is wyer as my hart se horison
 U stuur u Seun en hy word die berg
 En u smag na u seuns en dogters!

The preacher requests the congregation to give him and his wife a chance to move to the door so that he can greet everyone that leaves the church. The minister joins him on the pulpit and comments on the Youth ministry in the congregation. He does the benediction. The choir sings while people leave the building.

The church does not have a baby room and children are also part of the gathering. It would seem that children are not seen as a nuisance as they were allowed to be noisy at some stages. However, when they would cry inconsolably, for whatever reason, one of the adults accompanying them would take them outside until they were quiet and then they would return. Some of the children also brought along a small bag with toys to keep them busy. The congregants were greeting the preacher for another hour. People were also eating some snacks and drinking tea. I was approached by quite a few people who just wanted to greet and to welcome me in their presence.

Nobody asked me to explain my research to them. Maybe they were scared that I would bombard them with questions. I leave the building to take some photos outside. I leave the area at about 12h45. Quite a number of people were walking to church. I saw a few older people on crutches. They also walked to the church. There is a sports complex opposite the church building. A railway line also runs next to the side of the church building.

⁵¹⁵ The song loosely translates to the following: "Father, your heart is in me. Your love is deeper than any pain that I might experience. Your mercy is wider than the horizons of my heart. You sent your Son. You long for your sons and daughters".

9.9.2.2. Sunday morning service - 01 April 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive at the church at 09h45. Very few vehicles are parked in front of the building. Four young men are standing at the door, welcoming people and also distributing flyers. I take one and see that it is a function that the CYM is organizing. The event is called 100% Worship. Upon entering the church, I see that the pews are visibly empty as well. I see only a few children – two babies, three toddlers.

White and pink flower arrangement on the table in front of the pulpit. The minister later announced that the couple who got married there the previous day had donated the flowers to the church. There are also two potplants on the stage. The front of the pulpit is covered with a maroon cloth and the words “God is love” is embroidered in gold.

2. Ritual Objects

It is the same as on the previous visit.

3. Ritual Time

The church council enters through a stage door at 10h30 and the service ends at 11h40.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The organist is playing some peaceful music and some people are listening with their eyes closed. There is a calm and peaceful atmosphere. People are waiting patiently for the minister and the church council members.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister enters the stage area from another door and moves onto the pulpit. Everyone stands, singing, during this procession. Afterwards, the minister requests everyone to take a seat. He then proceeds with the announcements. It is the 70th birthday celebrations of the Youth Brigade and the festivities are taking place at the other church building. This is one of the reasons why there are so few people present this morning. The second reason is that it is still school holidays and the children are probably still resting. He then requests everyone who is seated at the back to move forward.

The minister is dressed neatly in a black suit, white shirt and a white tie. He does not wear a toga and it does not seem to bother the congregation at all. This is now the second time that I see him on the pulpit without a toga. There is also a beaded AIDS ribbon on his right shoulder. There are 7 church council members, 6 men and 1 woman. They are neatly dressed in black and white.

6. Ritual Action

The minister provides additional information to what is displayed on the church bulletin. I see that the church is celebrating her 80th birthday this year. Apart from the weekly activities displayed on the bulletin, quite a number of other issues are also being addressed, like names of people who are celebrating their birthdays, wedding anniversaries, focus texts that congregants can engage with during the week, etc. He offers a special word for those who have celebrated their birthdays as well as a couple who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. *Congregation claps hands when they hear how long this couple have been together.*

He specifically tells the people who were celebrating their birthdays that it is normally a time when we take stock of our lives. He blesses them and promises them that God, who has been faithful in the past, will continue to be faithful in the future. *It is clear that this minister has a special relationship with several of the people. The manner in which he communicates with the congregants shows that he has been with them for quite a while. I must find out exactly how long he has been with this congregation. He is also very at ease on the pulpit. And he always talks with a pastoral voice.*

He also gives more information about the reading project that was launched. The organizers are hopeful to start with the project in the second quarter. The wards are busy with preparations for the bazaar that will take place 14 April 2012. The announcements take about 15 minutes. The minister then requests everyone to become still so that we can start this service in the Name of the Lord. He prays a prayer of praise; of thanksgiving for God's mercies and for His guidance.

Afterwards he blesses the congregation with the following words: “Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit”. [*Genade en vrede aan elkeen van u namens God die Vader, God die Seun en God die Heilige Gees*] The congregation then sings Hymn 100 verse 1 and 2.

A few people without hymn books are not singing along. Could they be guests?

The minister also welcomes all guests present this morning. He then announces that the Scripture reading is from John 12:12-16 and that we will look at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, i.e. Palm Sunday. He then asks everyone to become still so that we can pray. He prays that this Palm Sunday will have a new meaning for each one of us and that it won't just be part of yet another tradition in our lives.

A brief summary of the sermon follows.

“The donkey is a wonderful thing! He stands and thinks while the skunk stinks. The donkey is a wonderful thing!” This is one of the poems that talks about the donkey and it reminds him about an actor, Al Debbo. People sometimes look at a donkey as being a dumb and stubborn animal. But the donkey that we read about is no joke and is used by Jesus to tell a story. The donkey is used to transport Jesus into Jerusalem. And Jesus is described as “a king that is coming in the Name of the Lord”.

[Die donkie is 'n wonderlike ding. Hy staan en dink terwyl die muishond stink, die donkie is 'n wonderlike ding. Die gedig van die donkie laat hom dink aan 'n akteur, Al Debbo. Mense dink 'n donkie is dom, onnosel en steeks. Dis hoe mense soms na 'n donkie kyk. Die donkie waarvan ons gelees het is egter nie 'n grap nie en word gebruik deur Jesus om 'n storie te vertel. Die donkie is Jesus se vervoermiddel in Jerusalem. Jesus word beskryf as die koning wat kom in die Naam van die Here. Waarom word Jesus so beskryf?]

The political context of this text is as follow: the Romans were the world rulers at that time and Israel was also a province of Rome, just as Namibia was seen as a fifth province of South Africa when it was colonized. In the same way Israel and Palestine was a province of Rome. Pilate was the governor of Israel during this time. People were also taxed heavily. The ordinary Jewish people hated the tax collectors because they were in service to Rome.

Grain was planted but it was then exported to Italy, etc. Israel was in effect looted because of the Roman rule. There were uprisings against the Roman rule. One of such an uprising was 1500 years before Jesus entered Jerusalem. Judas Maccabee, or Judas the Hammer, led this uprising against the Syrian rulers. He made sure that the Syrian oppression came to an end. Judas and his followers used the branches of palmtrees as a sign of their victory. 4.38 The Jewish people were also under the impression that Jesus had come to free them of the Roman rule.

[Politieke konteks: Die Romeine was wêreldheersers. Israel was ook 'n provinsie van Rome. Namibia word beskou as vyfde provinsie van Suid-Afrika. So was Israel en Palestina 'n provinsie van Rome. Die keiser het regeer. Pilates was in daardie tyd goewerneur van Israel. Mense moes baie belasting betaal. Die gewone Joodse bevolking het die tollenaars gehaat want hulle was in diens van die Romeinse heersers. Hulle het dus die Romeine gehaat. Daar was opstande teen Romeinse heersers. Een van die opstande was 150 jaar voor Jesus Jerusalem ingery het. Judas Macabeus, oftewel Judas die Hamer – het hierdie opstand gelei teen Siriese heersers. Hy het Siriërs se onderdrukking verbreek. As teken van die oorwinning het Judas en sy volgelingen palmtakke gebruik. Die mense was dus hoopvol dat met Jesus se koms die Romeinse oorheersing verbreek sou word.]

God is worried about people who are oppressed. However, Jesus used a donkey to enter Jerusalem. The donkey can be seen as a metaphor of the sort of leadership and kingship that Jesus embodied. He came to serve; to be obedient to His Father, and He chose simplicity. The donkey is a pack-animal. It carries a variety of burdens and it is in service to the people that they belong to. Jesus Christ came to give a better life to people – to give people life. He resurrected people, like Lazarus; he washed people's feet – he was a servant. He did not come to be served but to be a servant himself. He sacrificed himself on the cross for this world so that this world could benefit from his life and from his sacrifice. Jesus gave his life because he was obedient to his Father. In his final hours it might seem as if he was unwilling to give his life. But he stayed true to his calling. He sacrificed his life for his children, even though it was not easy. There is a saying that goes “fools rush in where angels fear to tread”. This is probably exactly what he was experiencing.

[God is besorg oor mense wat onderdruk word. Maar Jesus kies die donkie om Jerusalem binne te gaan. Die donkie-metafoor vertel die storie van die soort leierskap wat Jesus voorstaan. Hy kom om

te dien, om gehoorsaam te wees aan Sy Vader. Hy kies eenvoud. Die donkie is 'n pakkier en dra allerlei laste. Dit staan in diens van die mense aan wie hulle behoort. Jesus Christus kom om 'n beter lewe te gee aan mense, om mense lewe te gee. Hy het ook mense lewend gemaak soos vir Lasarus. Hy het voete gewas, hy het diens gelewer. Hy het nie gekom om gedien te word nie, maar om te dien. Hy het homself gegee as offer aan die kruis vir die redding van die wêreld – dat ander voordeel kan trek uit sy lewe en offer aan die kruis. Jesus lê sy lewe af in gehoorsaamheid aan die Vader. Tydens die laaste ure van Jesus lyk dit of hy onwillig was om die offer te bring. Maar hy gee sy lewe vir sy skape, maar dit is swaar. Dis nie 'n maklike “fools rush in where angels fear to tread”.]

Jesus is not unaware of what is in store for him! However, he submits himself to the will of his Father. Jesus was prepared to pay the price! He gave his life so that others could receive life and be with God forever. This is what the kingship of Jesus meant and it was totally opposite to what people were expecting him to do. He is a king that planted his kingdom in obedience to God. God asks us to walk the path of the donkey and not to ask for riches and status. If we are in a position of power then we should follow the example of Jesus and have a spirit of humility.

[Jesus is nie dwaas of onnosel oor wat vir Hom voorlê nie – om die straf van die sonde van die wêreld te dra nie. Maar hy onderwerp homself aan die gesag van God. Jesus is bereid om die prys te betaal. Hy gee sy lewe sodat ander lewe kan kry en ewig by God kan wees. Dis die aard van die koningskap van Jesus – so teenstrydig met wat mense verwag. Hy is 'n koning wat sy koninkryk vestig in gehoorsaamheid aan God. God vra dat ons die weg van die donkie sal loop – dat ons nie sal vra na rykdom, mag en status nie. As ons in 'n posisie van gesag is dan moet ons die posisie beklee soos Jesus – in nederigheid, oorgawe en opofferend.]

Let us go into this holy week and think anew of the donkey – Jesus who rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Ask the Lord what you can do for others. Do I just expect things from others, or do I also avail myself to other people? Do I fulfill my calling as Jesus did – in humility, in obedience, with commitment and sacrifice? Let us try to understand the way of the donkey and also make it a part of our lives!

[Laat ons die heilige week ingaan en opnuut dink aan die donkie – Jesus wat op die donkie Jerusalem ingegaan het. Vra die Here wat ek vir ander kan doen; doen ek dit wel of wil ek net ontvang? Of gee ek myself in diens van ander – vervul ek my roeping soos Jesus? In nederigheid, oorgawe, opofferend]

en in gehoorsaamheid? Laat ons die weg van die donkie probeer verstaan en die tipe bewussyn daarvan ook verstaan.]

Amen.

Prayer

- Acknowledges that Jesus was in solidarity with the poor [*Jesus is in solidariteit met die armes*];
- We are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ – asked Him to assist us in making a difference in the lives of people [*ons is die hande en voete van Jesus. Laat ons hom vra om ons te help om 'n verskil te maak*];
- Prays for our government [*bid vir die regering*];
- Help us to have insight to make a difference where we live [*bid dat ons insig sal hê om 'n verskil te maak daar waar ons bly*];
- Prays for the wellness of the congregants [*bid vir lidmate se wel en wee*].

The offerings are collected while we sing hymn 99. After the collection one of the deacons prays for the blessing of the offerings.

The final hymn is 97 and we sing verses 1 and 2.

The minister then invites everyone to the Good Friday service later in the week. He then sends everyone home with the following blessing: “Receive the blessing of the Lord. Let us think of the donkey – the way of obedience, humility – and let us each walk this road. The Lord will bless you and keep you; He will look upon you with compassion; He will answer your prayers, now and every Easter”. Amen

People greet each other while they are leaving and within minutes the church and parking area are empty. *This was a very quick exit, indeed.*

9.9.2.3. Sunday morning Baptismal service - 22 April 2012

1. Ritual Space

We arrive at 10h20 and a few congregants are standing at the door. They greet us very warmly. I am accompanied by my 4-year old son. Bulletins are placed on a chair at the back of the church and everyone is welcome to take one. As soon as I take a place in the

pews, at the back, one of the church choir members comes over and greets me. She welcomes me and says that she hopes I will enjoy the service. The lady organist is playing some beautiful gospel tunes and people are quietly talking to each other. The atmosphere is quite relaxed. My son shows me all the babies that are in church. I assume that most of them will be baptized this morning because they are dressed in white baptismal dresses or suits. There are several elderly people present this morning.

At 10h25 people are still streaming into the building. They take time to greet each other with a firm handshake. I see a few white people who are also in attendance. I know that this church has strong ties with the Dutch Reformed Church in the same area and that they do worship together on a regular basis.

The liturgical area is the same as on my previous visit, except that the baptismal font is now also at the centre of the area. It is a beautiful wooden font in the shape of a torch. There are no fresh flowers this morning, only two potplants.

The choir is present and members are dressed neatly in beautiful blue and gold robes.

There is a wooden cross on stage, behind the pulpit. *I wonder whether this is part of the liturgical area now or are they perhaps going to use it for the service on Good Friday?*

2. Ritual Objects

The news bulletin, Bibles and hymn book.

The researcher's own observations with the help of all senses, mainly visually and auditory.

3. Ritual Time

Starting time 10h32 and the service ends at 11h40.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The service is conducted in Afrikaans. Notes were taken in English. Notes of the meditation will be done in English and Afrikaans.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister is dressed neatly. He is wearing a black toga and a white shirt and a white tie is showing beneath the collar of the toga. The church council members are also neatly dressed in black and white.

6. Ritual Action

At 10h32 the minister and the church council members enter the liturgical area and the congregants sing “Ek wil die Here loof⁵¹⁶” as an entrance hymn. The minister greets everyone and asks all guests to stand so that he can extend a special word of welcome to them. The pews are still quite empty. After welcoming the guests, the minister focuses his attention on the news bulletin. He points out a few important issues. *It struck me that the minister does the announcements and not the scribe, as is usually the practice in other congregations.*

A few minutes are then devoted to congratulating everyone who has celebrated their birthdays and wedding anniversaries during the past week. There is a couple who have celebrated their forty-sixth wedding anniversary. The minister comments that this is indeed a joyous occasion. He prays that their love will increase for one another and that God will protect and bless them abundantly. He then also wished everyone a happy birthday and gives them Psalm 131:2 as verse. His wish for everyone is that they experience rest and inner peace because we know that the Lord is with us. A man comes to the front and also wishes the minister a happy birthday. The minister also expresses the church’s condolences with all families who are going through a difficult time and who are experiencing bereavement in their families. The minister also welcomes the researcher and expresses the hope that she will enjoy the service with the rest of the congregants.

The congregation is then invited to become still before the Lord. We are asked to be calm, and focus our energies on the Lord; to try and forget about our activities at home; to become aware that we are indeed in the presence of God.

⁵¹⁶ I want to praise the Lord

Votum: [*Genade, barmhartigheid en vrede vir u van God onse Vader en Sy geliefde Seun Jesus Christus, deur die kragtige werking van die Heilige Gees. Amen*]

Hymn of praise: hymn 45

Church choir are asked to sing and the congregation is also asked to open Bibles at John 11. The choir sings "*Laat my nooit u weg verlaat nie*". There are twenty-two grown-ups, which includes thirteen women. I do not see any youth amongst the group. The congregation does not clap hands after the singing. The pulpit-prayer is then offered by the minister. The Scripture reading is from John 11:1-45.

Meditation:

The focus of the sermon is on the resurrection of Lazarus. The sermon starts with a question. What do you think would happen if the resurrection of Lazarus would happen today? In our time? With all the powerful communication tools that we have today, what message would be sent to the rest of the world? URCSA-news, You magazine and financial magazines would most probably all have had different headings. Jesus might have been portrayed as a hero! What would you have asked Lazarus? Maybe, "What does life look after death?" or "What happens when you have taken your last breath?" and "What is it like to be with God?". We are all curious about life after death. In this text, or the rest of the gospel of John, we do not read anything about what happens after death. There is no recording of what Lazarus actually experienced through this whole process. Why? Why does John not tell us anything about these specifics?

[*Fokus: Opwekking van Lasarus uit die dood*]

Wat sou gebeur as die verhaal in ons dag sou afspeel, met ons kragtige kommunikasie middele? Watter boodskap sou ons die wêreld ingestuur het? Die URCSA-nuus, Huisgenoot, Finansiële tydskrifte sou almal verskillende opskrifte gehad het. Nuus sou soos 'n veldbrand versprei het. Jesus sou dalk die held wees want die gebeure is nuuswaardig. Wat sou u vir Lasarus gevra het? "Hoe lyk die lewe anderkant die graf?", of dalk "Wat gebeur wanneer jy jou laaste asem uitblaas?", of "Hoe is dit om by God te wees?". Mense is nuuskierig oor die lewe anderkant die graf. In ons skrifgedeelte of selfs die res van die Johannes evangelie lees ons niks van wat gebeur het anderkant die dood nie.

Ons lees nêrens van Lasarus se “experience” nie. Waarom die doodste stilte? Waarom vertel Johannes ons hierdie verhaal?]

We have two main characters in this narrative, namely Jesus and Lazarus. John is trying to tell us something that we could easily overlook. How does John paint Jesus and Lazarus? His portrayal of Lazarus is without emotion. On the other hand, Jesus is full of emotion. Lazarus says nothing while Jesus talks and calls out with a loud voice. Lazarus is very passive while Jesus postpones his journey with two days. So is Lazarus not happy to be alive again, to be re-united with his family again? These are indeed logical reactions and we would have expected him to display some kind of reaction. Why does John tell the story in this way?

He told the narrative in this particular way because he wanted the readers to understand the essence of the story. The story is about Jesus that resurrects and God that acts. The story is in actual fact not just about the resurrection of Lazarus. The focus of the story is Jesus and God, and not Lazarus. The story teaches us about Jesus who will die and about us who will one day live even though we have died. It is about God who gives life; God who opens a window of hope for people; God who gives meaning to life.

[Ons het twee hoofkarakters in hierdie verhaal – Jesus en Lasarus. Johannes wil vir ons iets sê wat ons dalk maklik kan miskyk. Hoe teken Johannes vir Jesus en Lasarus? Johannes se vertelling van Lasarus is sonder emosie. Jesus is belaaï met emosies. Lasarus sê niks – Jesus praat en bid en roep met ‘n harde stem. Lasarus is totaal passief – Jesus stel sy vertrek met twee dae uit. Was Lasarus dan nie bly om sy familie weer te sien nie? Dis tog ‘n logiese reaksie om uiting aan emosies te gee. Waarom vertel Johannes die storie dan so? Johannes wil hê sy lesers moet verstaan waaroor hierdie verhaal gaan. Dit gaan oor Jesus Christus wat opwek en wat handel, nie oor Lasarus wat opgewek word en weer lewe nie. Dit gaan oor Jesus en God, en nie eintlik soseer oor Lasarus nie. Dit gaan oor Jesus wat gaan sterf en oor ons wat weer eendag sal lewe nadat ons gesterwe het. Dit gaan oor God wat veral lewe gee; God wat vir die wêreld ‘n venster van hoop oopmaak; God wat sin en betekenis aan ons lewens gee.]

We are now going to baptize our children and most of us can't wait to see what their outfits look like. We are also curious to see which ones are going to cry! For some of us, in most cases, the essence of this ceremony is not so important. For us it is about day-to-day issues. But through this sacrament we need to realize that God is actually at the centre of everything. It is about God! It is about the emotions of God; the love of God; a God who cannot wait to give these children the sign of His covenant; that He will be with them until the end of time; that He will always love them!

The children are quite busy and some are even crying.

[Ons gaan nou ons kinders doop en gewoonlik kan ons nie wag om te sien hoe hulle klere lyk nie; hoe gaan hulle optree; wie gaan huil, ens. Dit gaan vir ons dikwels oor ander sake wanneer ons kinders doop. Maar die doop wil eintlik sê dat doop oor God gaan. Dit gaan oor God; oor die emosies van God; God se liefde. Dit gaan oor 'n God wat nie kan wag om die verbondsteken te gee nie.]

God gives wisdom to us as parents to rear these children in His presence. As parents we can only be in awe of God's great mercies bestowed on us. Baptism is about God and not about people. If we realize this we will submit our lives to God completely on a daily basis. If someone were resurrected in our time everybody would be talking about it. People would praise God for the miracle. And this is exactly what should happen when we baptise. Through the sign of the covenant these children are now part of Christ's death and resurrection (v25-26 "wie lewe en in my glo, sal nooit sterwe nie"). Is what happens at this baptism still news to us? Does it still excite us? A miracle happens at this baptismal font and we need to talk about it again. May the grace that God shows us through baptism touch each one of us again in a very special way. Amen

[God gee aan ouers wysheid om sy kinders in Sy teenwoordigheid groot te maak. As ouers kan ons maar net in verwondering wees. By die doop gaan dit oor God en nie mense nie. Dan sal ons ons lewens daaglik aan God toewy, want by die doopvont gee God vir ons lewe. As iemand in ons tyd opgewek sou word – almal sou oor Lasarus gepraat het wat uit die dood opgewek was. Mense sou God geloof en geprys het. Wat gebeur by die doopvont? Deur die teken van die verbond te kry is hierdie kinders nou deel van die verbondsbelofte – hulle is deel aan Christus se dood en opstanding.]

Is wat by die doopvont gebeur nog nuus vir ons? Raak ons nog opgewonde tydens die doopbediening? By die doopvont gebeur daar weer 'n wonder waarom ons moet praat. Mag ons weer diep getref word deur die groot genade van God wat Hy by die doop bewys. Amen]

Prayer (asking God specifically to teach parents anew, through His Holy Spirit, about the meaning of baptism).

Choir sings “Behoed my as ek my gaan neerlê”. There is a holy atmosphere. Congregation is very quiet.

The children's parents are now called to the front and questions about the baptism are posed to them. The children as well as the witnesses then join the parents in front. Some of the children are quite busy during this session but they are accommodated. The train also passes the church during this session but it does not interfere with the proceedings. The sound system of the church is quite good and the minister's voice is clear. The parents and extended families are congratulated after the baptism. The congregation was actually very quiet throughout the whole sermon. Normally they agree audibly with the minister if they agree about something, but this morning it seems that people were deep in thought about what was being said.

The congregation sings hymn 271 while the offerings are collected. There are not many children in the church this morning. I wonder what happened to the Sunday school children. Maybe it is holiday.

We are invited to sing hymn 354 in closure of all the proceedings. The minister then does the benediction.

As we leave the church a few people approach me to wish me well for the rest of the Sunday and the week ahead. People talk briefly with one another and then get into their vehicles. After about 5 minutes most of the people have left. While I am in the car, still writing a few notes, some people still approach me to talk a little bit about my research. These are mostly elderly people and they are very friendly and seem genuinely interested in the topic of my research.

9.9.2.4. Sunday morning Holy Communion service – 10 June 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive at 10h10 and only a few people are in attendance. However, it is still early. The information bulletin is at the back on a chair and I take one. The praise and worship team is also present this morning and the group consists of six female and four male participants. They are standing in front of the Holy Communion table. It is the first time that I see them at one of my observation visits. The Holy Communion table has been prepared and has been covered with a white cloth.

The liturgical area has fresh flowers and the regular potplants. On the pulpit is a white candle with a red bow. This candle is normally used when prayers go out for people who are affected and infected with the AIDS virus. There is also a container with water as well as a glass of water. Behind the pulpit is a black wooden cross with a red bow draped over it. There is a door behind the pulpit. A cloth with embroidered words “God is in beheer⁵¹⁷” has been fixed above the door. These words are in red.

It is now 10h20 and still more people are entering. Those present are enjoying the praise and worship session which is led by the praise and worship team. There is a good mixture of young and older people present. The praise and worship team invite everyone to stand and sing along with them.

It fills me with great nostalgia when I see the number of older people attending this worship service. They are neatly dressed, some of them even have hats and gloves on, and it reminds me of when I was growing up in our small congregation in Namibia. The congregation seems to be relaxed and they are really getting into the praise and worship songs. As people enter the building they greet each other and even exchange a few words before they take their seats.

It is a cold morning and many people also try to get a little bit of warmth into their bodies by rubbing their hands together. It was 7.5°C when I left Stellenbosch this morning. The sun is shining but it is still quite cool. At 10h28 there are quite a few open spaces. *I wonder if the cold weather is keeping people away. There are also very few Sunday school children present.*

2. Ritual Objects

Hymn books, Bibles, bulletin

⁵¹⁷ God is in control.

3. Ritual Time

More worship songs are sung from 10h25 while the congregation awaits the entry of the preacher and the church council. They enter at 10h35. The service ends at 12h00.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The service is conducted mostly in Afrikaans.

5. Ritual Identity

The service starts with an opening hymn "*Ek wil die Here loof*". The words of welcome are done by the minister. His white shirt and tie shows underneath his toga and he looks very neat. Guests are asked to stand for a few minutes. Only one person stands. Minister welcomes the person and then continues with the announcements. He highlights a few points from the bulletin. *He addresses the congregation as "sisters and brothers", and normally when you hear a minister the address is "brothers and sisters".*

Minister also does the congratulations for weddings, birthdays and anniversaries. Psalm 27:11, 14 are given as a "gift".

The church door is closed while all this is happening. I think it is because of the cold weather because normally the door is not closed during any of the proceedings in the church.

The minister asked the congregation to get acquainted with the names of all the people who are sick. These names appear on the bulletin. He asked the congregation to remember these congregants in their prayers.

A new congregant is then welcomed into the congregation.

6. Ritual Action

Votum and words of blessing are done followed by a hymn.

Scripture reading: 2 Corinthians 4:1-15

The minister prays before the Scripture reading.

Message:

He starts the sermon with a question. When we look back at our lives, which one of us can say with honesty that we have made a difference in people's lives? That we have made a

positive impact (John 13:5) the way that Jesus expects it from us? Do we help to make our community a better place? No? then why not?

[Die preek word met 'n vraag begin – wie van ons kan eerlik vir mekaar sê dat ons 'n verskil maak, 'n impak het op ons lewe? 'n Verskil maak ten goede, soos Jesus van ons verwag? Help ons om 'n beter plek te maak? Nie? Maar hoekom dan nie?]

A man worked as a water-carrier (waterdraer) for the king. He was responsible to make sure that there was always fresh water at the palace. He had two vases with which he carried the water. But when he got to the palace one of the vases was full of water but the other one was half. The full vase was very happy but the cracked vase was so ashamed because it could only carry half the amount of water. One day the cracked vase apologized to the water-carrier because he must collect so much water.

He knows it is his fault because of the cracks. The water-carrier then showed the cracked vase the beautiful flowers growing on the side where he was carried. I have known about your weak points – all these years. But I planted seeds and you watered them while we were walking and you were leaking. I used the flowers to decorate the king's table.

[‘n Man het as ‘n waterdraer by ‘n koning gewerk. Hy moes sorg vir vars water in die paleis. Hy het twee erdekruie gehad om hom te help. Maar wanneer hy by die paleis kom het die een kruik altyd ‘n vol “load” gehad maar die ander een was net half. Die vol kruik was baie gelukkig maar die gekraakte kruik was skaam omdat hy net die helfte van sy water kon bring. Hy sê eendag vir die waterdraer dat hy jammer is omdat hy so baie water moet gaan skep, en dit net omdat hy lek. Maar toe wys die waterdraer hom die pragtige blomme wat groei langs die pad – aan die kant van die gekraakte kruik. Die waterdraer sê vir die kruik – ek het jou swakheid geken al die jare. En daarom het ek sade geplant aan jou kant van die pad en jy het dit natgemaak. Die blomme gebruik ek nou om die koning se tafel te verfraai.]

Paulus sê dat daar iets in ons is wat die vermoë het om ‘n verandering te bewerkstellig in ons omgewings. Wat is die skat waarvan Paulus praat en waar pas dit in? Paulus wil juis die gemeente van Korinte inlig dat die mens niks anders is as kleipotte nie, potte wat

maklik kan breek. Hierdie brose potte bewaar 'n skat van ongelooflike waarde. In die Bybelse tyd het die mense nie houters gehad nie. hulle het gebruik gemaak van kleipotte wat maklik bekombaar en bekostigbaar was. Hulle het hierdie potte ook gebruik om skatte te bewaar. Die enigste nadeel was dat dit maklik gebreek het. Ons is soos klei in God se hande (Jer 18:6). Ons kan dus nie op ons eie kragte staatmaak nie. Ons is nie volmaak en perfek nie. Ons moet besef ons is feilbare instrumente in die hand van God.

Die skat wat God aan ons toevertrou, is om die evangelie aan die wereld te verkondig. God vertrou die verspreiding van die evangelie aan swak en feilbare mense soos ons. Ons is dus nie die belangrikste nie. Ons krag kom van God. Ons kan dus die volgende saam met Paulus ervaar (v8-10). Ons kan alleen volhardend lewe wanneer ons besef waar ons krag vandaan kom – van God. Wanneer daar ook blydschap in ons lewens is, moet ons ook met ons woorde en daede toon dat Jesus Christus Here in ons lewens is.

Paulus praat van die dood wat besig is om in hom te werk en dan praat hy ook van die verlossingswerk van Jesus Christus tussen die heidene. Paulus was ook gekraak (1 Tim 1:15). En tog het Jesus Christus juis vir Paulus gekies om die evangelie aan die heidene te versprei. Paulus sou op die einde ook sterwe vir hierdie bediening. Hy kon nie stilbly nie – hy het gelek – hy het die evangelie verkondig!

Ons moet ook toelaat dat die Here ons met ons broosheid gebruik om 'n verskil te maak daar waar ons lewe. Ons kan kies om iewers weggesteek te word omdat ons bewus is van ons swakhede. Maar ons kan ten spyte van hierdie swakhede Jesus Christus toelaat om ons te gebruik. Ons moet besef dat die krag om 'n verskil te maak nie in ons lê nie maar dit kom van God sodat Hy al die lof en eer kan kry. Ons het die voorreg om vanoggend aan die tafel te sit ten spyte van ons broosheid. Die tafel is soos 'n rusplek langs die pad waar Hy bevestig dat Hy ons liefhet en dat ons aan Hom behoort. Dat Hy ons toerus en bekwaam vir Sy diens. Die tafel wil kom sê: “Kom sit aan en sien dat ek my Seun vir jou gegee het. Kom sit aan sodat ek by jou kan wees – julle wat kleipot-mense is”. Jesus Christus lewe sodat ons die volle lewe mag hê. Mag dit ons ervaring wees dat Jesus Christus op 'n besondere wyse met elkeen van ons is.

Kom ons bid saam ...

Ges 257 terwyl die tafel voorberei word en die tekens uitgedeel word.

Ges 251

Ges 325 terwyl die dominee die kerkraad bedien.

Instelling van die nagmaal: Ons eet en drink omdat ons aan Jesus Christus behoort en ook aan mekaar.

Dankgebed nadat brood en wyn geniet is.

Offergawes Ges 260.

Slotlied Ges 268.

Seën word uitgespreek.

9.9.2.5. Sunday morning Dankoffer service - 01 July 2012

1. Ritual Space

Arrive at 10h15. People are walking and driving to church. Not many people inside the church at present. Organist plays hymns. People are sitting quietly, listening to the music. Others are talking quietly amongst themselves. There is a relaxed atmosphere. A few young people are present but there are mostly older people. By 10h20, only two children are present. Two colourful flower arrangements on both sides of the pulpit. There are also potplants in front of the pulpit. The sound system's control panel is on a small table in front of the pulpit. All the lights in the building are on. A few windows are open. It is a cool morning but the sun is shining. There is a white candle with a red bow on the pulpit. It is not burning. There is also some drinking water for the preacher.

2. Ritual Objects

News bulletin, hymn book and Bible.

3. Ritual Time

The service starts at 10h30 and ends at 11h40.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

Sermon conducted mostly in Afrikaans.

5. Ritual Identity

Members of the church choir start to arrive from 10h22. They wear blue togas with golden collars. By 10h25 the church is still quite empty. *Seems to me that when it is school holidays the children are absent.* Hymn 241 is sung while the congregants are waiting for the minister and the church council members.

The church council enters at 10h30. They are accompanied by a guest minister. The minister is wearing a toga, a white shirt and a white tie. Announcements are done by a church council member. He refers to the news bulletin that was distributed.

The minister greets the congregation and asks that we sing “It’s a welcome here” while we greet each other. People are relaxed and greet each other, some even exchange hugs. A praise and worship song is sung, “God is moving, God is here, moving all over the earth”.

6. Ritual Action

The votum and blessing is done and the congregation then sings hymn 22.

The law is done with the guidance of Romans 13:8-10. There is a focus on love and forgiveness. Love does no harm. Hymn 241 is sung. *There is a definite element of lament in the service so far.*

The church choir sings “Lord grant me mercy”. There is a quiet atmosphere and no-one claps hands when the choir has finished. *It is as if the congregation understands that this is a holy moment.*

Scripture reading: Psalm 119:49-56

A prayer of thanksgiving is offered to the Lord.

Theme of sermon: Praise and worship should be a way of life/*Praise and worship – 'n lewenswyse!*

There is a poetic secret in the psalm that was read. There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 stanzas with eight verses in each stanza in Psalm 119. Each letter marks a message. The section that we read starts with a “Z”. This letter is not often used in Hebrew. In modern times this letter indicates the number seven. So the question is: “What type of song can you write?”

[Die prediker dui aan dat daar 'n digterlike geheim in die gelese woord is. 22 letters kom voor in die Hebreuse alfabet – 22 strofes van 8 verse elk in Psalm 119. Met elke letter van die alfabet word 'n besondere boodskap in God se woord opgeteken. Die gelese deel begin met “Z”. Dis 'n skaars letter in Hebreeus. In moderne tye dui die letter net 'n getal aan, nl. 7. So watter tipe lied kan geskryf word?]

We will meditate on verse fifty-four. The poem is about the Word of God as a revelation. Some suggest that this is the last psalm. That could also be why the alphabet is used.

[Ons teks van oordenking is v54. Die gedig gaan oor die Woord as openbaring van God. Geleerdes meen dis eintlik die laaste psalm. Daarom dan ook die moontlike gebruik vna die alfabet.]

V49 – the poet prays that God will keep His promises; that God will remember him. God’s Word is his only hope. His whole life is dependent on God’s Word. When life knocks him down it is only the Word of God that keeps him standing. This Word is his hope and his comfort. *[Digter bid dat God sy beloftes sal nakom; dat God hom sal onthou. God se woord is al waarop hy hoop. Sy hele lewe is afhanklik van die woord van God. As die druk van die lewe hom onderkry, is dit God se Woord wat hom aan die gang hou. Die Woord is sy hoop en sy troos.]*

V51 – people are making fun of him because he is serious about his walk with God. He holds on to God and His promises. The poet does not wait to see God’s working in his life. He finds comfort in the Word regardless of his circumstances. *[Mense dryf met hom die spot*

oor die manier waarop hy ernstig met God lewe en wandel. Hy laat hom nie afskrik nie. Hy klou vas aan die Here en aan Sy beloftes.

Die digter wag nie eers vir God se ingryping in sy lewe nie. Hy vind reeds troos en vertroue in God se Woord te midde van sy omstandighede]

V53 – the poet is upset about the way in which the wicked are dealing with the Word of God. They do not fear God. They are just looking after their own well-being. [*Die digter is ontsteld oor hoe die goddelose omgaan met die Woord van God. Hulle vrees God nie. Hulle is net oor hulle eie belange besorg.*]

V54 - U voorskrifte is vir my 'n lied in my lewe. Dit klink mos nie logies om 'n lied te dig wanneer jy in ellende verkeer nie! Wanneer jy in pyn verkeer, is dit gewoonlik moeilik om 'n loflied tot God te sing. Gewoonlik sing jy dan 'n klaaglied TOTDAT God jou antwoord.

V55-56 – Die digter dink tot diep in die nag aan God. Om God se bevele te gehoorsaam is vir hom lewe.

Hoe kan ons sing as die druk van die lewe ons wil vernietig; as ons so baie klagtes het? Ons kan net musiek in die gesange hoor wanneer ons God se Woord gehoorsaam. Die digter word nie gedwing om die lied te sing onder moeilike omstandighede nie! Hy het dit so verkies. Hy het naby God gevoel.

Waaraan hou ons vas? Het God se Woord ook 'n besondere plek in my lewe? Kla ons, of sing ons onder druk en stryd? Mag God ons bemoedig om lofliedere te sing onder moeilike omstandighede. Amen.

Iemand raak siek en word uit die gebou gedra. Die predikant bid sommer onmiddelik vir haar en haar familie.

In sy gebed erken hy dat ons totaal afhanklik is van God en dat die Woord alles is vir ons, alhoewel dit soms moeilik kan wees. Hy vra dat God ons sal voed met die Woord sodat ons in alle omstandighede 'n loflied tot Hom kan sing. Hy vra dan die gemeente om te sing "Be still and know that I am God".

Koor sing "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from where cometh my help" Psalm 129.
Gemeente klap hande nadat hulle gesing het.

Offergawes en dankoffers terwyl ons Ges 198 (Ps 126) sing. Daarna sing ons Ges 333.
Die predikant verwelkom ook die navorser in die erediens, al is dit dan ook so laat.
Slotgesang Ges 30 (Ps 150) en seën.

It was quite interesting that all hymns were psalms this morning. Very clear lines were drawn today with regards to lament in our lives. It is the first sermon where lament is so clearly stipulated, and not just mentioned in prayers. People still talk with each other after the service. A few come to greet me and to ask how the studies are going. By 10h50 everyone has left.

9.9.2.6. Holy Communion service by researcher 12 August 2012

Notes are taken by the research assistant.

200 people, as counted by church council.

Bekendstelling van tema.

- Aanvanklik weinig (byna geen) reaksie.
- Meer belangstelling/beter begrip (beaam) met verdere uitleg.
- Meer “stroef” met uitnodiging tot deelname.

Gebed – God wat die diepste kamers van ons harte ken; alleen by U dat ons rus vind.

Skriflesing: Ps 13 (goeie preek / “nuwe” preek?)

[The service is conducted by the researcher

Introduction of the theme:

- *Initially almost no reaction.*
- *More interest as the researcher explains.*
- *Harsh expressions when invitation is made to participate in the liturgy.*

Prayer – God that knows our deepest being; only you give us rest.

Scripture reading: Ps 13 (good sermon / “new” sermon?)]

Aanvanklik geen sigbare reaksie – alleen luister.

Bietjie kriel (ongewoon? Ongemak?)

Stilte (vra vir openheid & broosheid).

Ouer mense – meestal stroef; blik gevestig op prediker.

Jong mense – kop onderstebo; oë afwaarts gerig.

Striking a nerve? – Ps 13 = ‘n stem van eie/ gesamentlike [wroeg] [vrae]

Softer facial expression – minder stroef, meer ontspanne -> relationship with suffering of Christ. Christus se eie lyding.

(meer beweging)

Positiewe beaming aan einde van preek.

[initially no visible reaction – people only listening.

People are fidgeting a bit (unusual? uncomfortable?)

Silence (asks for openness and being fragile)

Older people have mostly a harsh expression on their faces; looking at preacher.

Younger people are sitting with bowed heads; eyes focused downwards.

Psalm 13 is our voice/questions/struggles.

A softer facial expression seems to appear; people seem more relaxed.

Positive assent to the sermon].

Praktiese deelname:

Jongmens en vrou eerste vir deelname – geen ander

Man (wat traag kom), toe ouer persoon

Geen vrymoedigheid onder kinders – uitnodiging aan nog ‘n jongmens om kinders te verteenwoordig

[Participation:

Young person and a woman come first – no one else

A man joins them (reluctantly), then an older person

Young people very reluctant – another invitation is made to young people to come and represent the children]

Inleiding – om smart, lyde te kan kom deel

Beaming / knoppe wat knik

Benadruk – volunteers as verteenwoordigers van die gemeente

Nuuskierigheid onder gemeente

➔ Sout = trane (sien glimlagte op gesigte van gemeentelede [gedig/ gebed ‘n bietjie lank]

➔ Kerse = God is ons bergvesting [lig? Hoop - comfort?]

[Praktiese deel nie verweef met nagmaalstafel-liturgie]

4 simbole – 4 uitroepe in Ps 13

➔ Heuning = soet oomblikke

➔ Olyfolie – meer stroewer (een oom se oë toe -> vir gebed? Vaak? Ongemak? Shrug shoulders)

[Introduction – to share our pain and suffering

People agree by nodding their heads

Reiterate that the volunteers are representatives of the congregation

Congregants seem to be curious about what is going to happen

➔ *Salt equals the tears (smiles on faces of congregants) – prayer seems a bit long]*

➔ *Candles represents that God is our comfort*

(these elements are not intertwined with the liturgy of the Holy Communion)

4 symbols, 4 call-outs in Psalm 13

➔ *Honey – sweet moments*

➔ *Olive oil – people's expression seem to be more harsh (one person's eyes are closed – for prayer? Tired? Uncomfortable?)*

Stilte tydens salwing [silence while people are annointed]

Koor: Hide not Thy face when I am in trouble

Holy Communion is served

9.9.2.7. Sunday morning Dankoffer service – 23 September 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive at church at approximately 10h20. The liturgical area looks very colourful this morning. There are two big flower arrangements as well as two potplants. Not many people present but people are still arriving. It is a cold and rainy day and people are dressed warmly.

2. Ritual Objects

Bulletin, hymn book and Bible

3. Ritual Time

The minister and church council enters the church at 10h30. The service ends at 11h40.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The proceedings are done mainly in Afrikaans. The sound is the same – voices of the minister and congregants as well as the sound of the organ.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister is wearing a white shirt, white tie with his suit. There is an HIV and Aids bow on his left shoulder.

6. Ritual Action

The congregants sing “*Ek wil die Here loof*” while the minister and church council enters. The welcoming and announcements are done and a special word of congratulations is extended to all those celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries (*Ps 37:4 “Laat jou lewe aan die Here oor”*).

Not many people are in church this morning, approximately 80. Only 3 children are present.

There is a prayer request for everyone who is in poor health and for those families who have experienced death in their families – Josua 1:9.

Church council member invites people to enjoy the service.

The minister then welcomes everyone. *I don’t know this minister*. He announces that the *Fishers of men* choir will sing a few items to put us in the mood for their performance that evening.

Seëngroet (“*Ek slaan my oë op na die berge, waar sal my hulp vandaan kom? My hulp is van u o Here wat hemel en aarde gemaak het. Genade, barmhartigheid en vrede bid ek u toe van God ons Vader deur die werking van die Heilige Gees*”).

Hymn 7

A shortened version of the law is read - Matt 22:37-40. After this we sing hymn 60 verse

1. The acquittal is then done followed by the confession of faith.

Fishers of men sings “Stay right under the blood”.

The Scripture reading is taken from Numbers 11.

Meditation:

Interessante deel in die Bybel. Nie die eerste deel toe Moses by God kla oor kos nie. Dis ‘n tweede keer. Deel wys dat mense kort geheue het. Mense vergeet gou wat op hulle reis gebeur het. As mens in benoude situasie beland, dan vergeet ons hoe God ons al gehelp het. Volk kla by Moses – hy moes nou al lank na hulle gekerm luister. En hy raak ook “opstandig” met God. “Here, is dit my kinders hierdie? Het ek hulle in die wêreld gebring?” Moses word baie ontsteld. Waar moes hy vleis kry?

[This is an interesting part in the Bible. It is not the first time that Moses complains to God about food. It is the second time. This part shows how short our memories can be sometimes. People forget what has happened on their journey. When we are faced with challenging times we seem to forget how God has helped us before. The people moan and Moses gets impatient because he has had to listen to their moans. And he also gets upset with God. He wants to know from God whether the people are in fact his children. Moses is very upset. Where is he supposed to get meat?]

Daar was ook nie-Israeliete wat saam getrek het. Hulle was opstokers – het gekla oor die lack of meat. Dis nie Moses se volk nie! Hy doen vrywillige diens vir God. Moses het die voorreg gehad om in ‘n paleis groot te word. Hy het opleiding gekry om eendag koning te word, hoe om mense te lei. Hy was voorbereid om God se volk te lei. Nou is hy astrant met God.

[There were also people who were with them on this journey who were not Israelites. They were instigators and complained about the lack of meat. Moses was doing volunteer work - in service of God. He had the privilege to be brought up in a palace. He was schooled to become king one day - how to lead people. He was in fact prepared to lead the people of God. Now he has an attitude towards God.]

Dit laat die Ds dink aan wanneer ons kerkraadslede kies om diens vir God te verrig – ‘n genadige instrument wat deel in die koninkryk wat God besig is om te bou. Moses sit nou met ‘n problem – waar sal hy vleis kry? Ds maak korrelasie met ons vleis wat so duur is vandag – dalk ongelukkigheid rondom ons etenstafels, ook as vleis te min is.

[The situation reminds the minister of when we have to select church council members – people who will be part in building the kingdom of God. Moses has a problem: Where will he get meat? A correlation is made with the expensive meat that we get today. Sometimes family members might get upset because there is not enough meat on their plates.]

Moses vergeet van al die kere dat God voorsien het. God wil hê dat die volk elke dag kwartels bymekaar maak om so te besef dat God elke dag met hulle is. Kerkraad vergeet ook van God se voorsiening – het baie klagtes oor lede waarmee hulle moet saamwerk. Moses moes leer dat God se werk is genade wat ons het om te doen! Moses moes leer dat God magtig is! God voorsien in vleis. Kwartels lê 'n dagreis ver en 'n meter diep. Vir 'n maand lank sal hulle eet. Maak vir hulle 'n ton vleis bymekaar – elke een! Moses moes verstom staan. God straf nie vir Moses nie! Maar God vra hom om 70 leiers bymekaar te maak om hom te help. So sy leierskap is nou in gedrang (is eintlik 'n straf).

[Moses forgets about all the times when God provided. God wanted people only to pick up the quails that they would need for that day. This way they would know that God is with them, every day! The church council sometimes also forgets about God's provision. They sometimes have a lot of complaints about each other. Moses had to learn that doing God's work is by grace alone. Moses had to learn that God is powerful. God can provide meat. The quails are lying one metre deep for a day's journey. They would eat for a whole month. They were collecting a ton of meat per person. Moses must have been speechless. God does not punish Moses. But God ask of him to get 70 leaders to assist him. So in fact, his leadership could now become hard-pressed (so it is in fact a punishment).]

Mense het nie eintlik vleis geniet nie, toe laat God hulle sterf -> gulsigheid. Hulle het God uitgetart en almal sal nou weet van hulle gulsigheid. God gee nie net oorvloedig nie MAAR is ook regverdig. Laat God nie ons huise ook “mense wat gulsig is” noem nie omdat ons nie waardeer wat Hy vir ons doen nie. Mag God ons daartoe help. Amen.

[The people were greedy and God punished them with death. They provoked God and everyone will now know about their greediness. God does not just give abundantly but He is also a just God. May God never call our houses “people who were greedy” because we did not appreciate what he did for us. May God help us. Amen]

Gebed [*Prayer*]

Sangstuk – Fishers of men [*Fishers of men sings a song*]

Gesang 181 (offergawes) [*offerings*]

Slotgesang 141 [*closing hymn*]

Seën: “Mag die genade van onse Here Jesus Christus, die liefde van God en die gemeenskap van die Heilige Gees met elkeen van ons wees. Amen”

It is raining, so people are leaving quite quickly!!

9.9.2.8. Informal interview with the minister – 17 October 2012

Ek haal my Dictaphone uit om die gesprek op te neem en die predikant⁵¹⁸ deel sy ervarings met my toe hy ook nog studeer het. Ons gesels vir ‘n wyle oor ons studies en die mense wat ons ontmoet het. Ek noem ook dat ek nou klaar is met my observasie in die gemeente. Ek belowe om die terugvoering aan die kerkraad te stuur wanneer my studies afgehandel is.

Vraag: Hoe lank is jy nou al in die gemeente?

Antwoord: Dis nou 10 jaar

So jy is nou al ‘n redelike tydjie by hulle

Vraag: Ek weet nou dat julle vir xxx en vir yyy het. Maar my fokus was mos nou xxx. Ek het aan my promotor die set-up verduidelik. Oorspronklik sou ek altwee gemeentes gedoen het. Maar toe sê hy vir my dit sal baie interessant wees om te sien hoe ‘n tradisionele gemeente – hoe hulle omgaan met klagtes. Omdat dit mos nou ‘n ouer generasie is en ek meen die ouer mense het mos darem ook ‘n langer tyd geloop in hulle geloofslêwe. So toe het hy voorgestel ons moet eerder vir yyy los en dan konsentreer ons op xxx en dan kyk ons wat kom uit die questionnaires. Maar hierdie 10 jaar se ervaring sluit altwee gemeentes in? Want jy werk mos in altwee?

⁵¹⁸ This interview took place at the parsonage

Antwoord: Ja, ek werk in altwee gemeentes.

Vraag: Nou behalwe dat jy die gemeente ervaar as meer tradisioneel – kan jy verandering bespeur in die mindset van mense, alhoewel hulle tradisioneel is. Ek glo in die 10 jaar het jy probeer om nuwe dinge in te bring en dinge anderster te hanteer. Wat is jou persoonlike gevoel?

Antwoord: Ja, ek dink tog daar is by mense 'n gewilligheid of bereidwilligheid om bepaalde kopskuiwe te maak. En dis vir my baie interessant. [Maar is dit nou die grootmense?] Ek praat nou spesifiek van die grootmense. En dis vir my baie interessant, alhoewel nie almal nie. Maar daar is 'n groot persentasie van mense wat 'n behoefte het – laat ek dit so stel – aan vernuwing; aan verandering. En die feit dat mense daai gesindheid openbaar help ook vir jou as predikant om 'n paar nuwe goed te doen, verstaan jy?

Vraag: Is dit nou nuwe goed in terme van ...

Antwoord: Liturgiese veranderinge. Liturgiese oomblikke wat jy probeer inbou; nuwe oomblikke of momente wat jy wil skep of inbring in die erediens.

Vraag: Spesifiek nou ten opsigte van lament, ek weet baie mense het mos maar die idee dat as jy praat van lament jy praat net van kla. En dit stop daarso. So ek weet nou nie hoe ver jy omgaan met lament in hierdie tydperk nie. Ek wil nou nie eintlik praat in terme van begrafnis nie want tydens begrafnisdienste is daar tog 'n element van lament in jou preek en jy probeer ook om aan die familie vertroosting en berusting oordra. So ek wil nie regtig oor die begrafnisgedeelte praat nie. Ek wil meer oor die erediens praat.

– is die gemeente ook dalk vasgevang in die notion dat ons oorwinnaars in Christus is en daarom nie kan kla nie. ons moet juig en jubel voor die Here?

Antwoord: Oorwegend ja, ek moet dit nou maar erken. Dit is ongelukkig so. Hulle het nog daai onoorwinlike ingesteldheid. Dis asof mense wegstrem van klagte. Om die een of ander rede is mense nie gemaklik daarmee nie. alhoewel ek persoonlik oordeel, of van mening is dat dit behoort deel van ons spiritualiteit te wees. Maar dit is nie op die oomblik nie. Dit is nie op hierdie stadium 'n baie pertinente deel van ons spiritualiteit nie. Snaaks genoeg, ek sou dit dalk nogal bespeur in die ander gemeente. Hulle maak dalk makliker aanpassings. Ek sê nie hierdie gemeente maak nie aanpassings nie maar in gemeente yyy

gebeur die skuiwe net makliker. En as ons nou praat van dit gebeur makliker daar dan beteken dit nie daar is nie dieselfde ingesteldheid van ons is oorwinnaars nie. Miskien is dit baie sterker daar want daar is tog 'n element daarvan. Ek dink dit het dalk te make met mense wat al geestelik gegroei het. Dit hou dalk daarmee verband. Hulle is baie meer gemaklik om hulle broosheid bloot te stel. En ek dink dit het te make met mense se geestelike volwassenheid.

Vraag: Die kerk set-up daar anderkant is groter. So dis snaaks dat mense bereid is om in 'n groter spasie hulle broosheid bloot te stel. 'n Mens sou dink dat dit makliker in die kleiner set-up sou wees.

Antwoord: Maar ek moet ook se dat mense wat van buite af kom sê hulle beleef gemeente xxx warmer. Om die een of ander rede. Terwyl ek weer gemeente yyy warmer beleef.

Navorsers: Ja ok, maar ons ervaar mos ook maar dinge anders.

Predikant: Dis die ander ding. Mense se belewenisse is anders. Soms het dit dalk te make met 'n mens se ingesteldheid.

Navorsers: Of dalk ook hoe jy opgegroeï het. Want jy het dalk in so 'n konserwatiewe gemeente groot geword.

Predikant: Nou voel jy ook gemakliker...

Navorsers: En meer tuis.

Vraag: Tydens een van my besoeke – ek weet nie wie gepreek het nie, dit was 'n ouerige persoon. Hy het 'n kostelike boodskap gebring daai dag. En snaaks genoeg, hy en nog 'n ander manlike prediker, was die enigstes wie se preke pertinent lament-elemente ingehad het. Maar vir die res van die preke wat ek bygewoon het was die momente van lament meer in die gebede. En ek kom dit baie agter in die gemeentes wat ek besoek het – dat die lament-karakter van die diens net vasgevang word in die kanselgebed. Maar ek moet ook by sê dat die predikers was ook ouer persone. Ek weet nie of dit dalk 'n rol kan speel nie. Maar dit was my ervaring. Maar in die Xhosa-sprekende gemeente is hulle weer baie vry in terme van lament in die liturgie. Mense word na vore geroep om te kom sê ek sukkel met dit of dat, bid vir my asseblief. Die hele gemeente kom uit. Dis nie soos by die

kleurlinggemeentes nie. Selfs tydens my navorsingspreek moes ek twee drie keer mense nooi om na vore te kom om te kom deel in die praktiese deel van die lament. Ek het dit verwag maar dit was nogal interessant om dit voor my te sien afspeel. So die terugvoering ook wat ek gekry het is – ek is nou nog nie heeltemal daar deurgewerk nie – en ek moet ook by sê dat meeste van die mense is in die ouderdoms groep van 35 jaar en ouer (so hier en daar is daar 'n jong persoon wat die vorm ingevul het); almal sê dat daar is definitief 'n behoefte dat daar meer klem moet gelê word op lament – met die understanding dat dit gaan nie net oor kla nie. Dit gaan oor hoop, en soos wat jy gesê het, jou broosheid voor God blootstel en wag vir die heling. So ek dink regtig daar is scope in ons gemeentes daarvoor.

Antwoord: Nee, nee! Baie beslis. Die probleem is ek dink ons maak net te min daarvan.

Vraag: In jou opinie, in ons tradisie, hoe kan ons lament deel maak van ons eredienste? Sodat mense meer bewustelik weet ons is nou in lament-mode en dit is wat ons daardeur wil bereik. Jy wil natuurlik nie jou diens orchestrate nie; dat dit nou later lyk soos 'n sepie nie. Ek dink baie van ons predikante...

Antwoord: Kom ek stel dit so. Ek dink tog daar is 'n bietjie van 'n stukkie onkunde onder ons leiers. Ek dink een van die belangrike goed wat moet gebeur is dat predikante moet besef dat lament is 'n integrale deel van menswees. En dat in die lig van daardie kennis gaan dit dalk bietjie makliker wees om sekere momente in die erediens in te bou, waar 'n mens vir mense ruimte gee om wel te kla – alhoewel teen die agtergrond dat lament is baie meer as net kla. So dis vir my die een belangrike ding. Ons as predikante sal moet kopskuiwe maak wat lament aanbetref. Met ander woorde, ons sal onself moet bemagtig wat dit aanbetref, meer kennis opdoen oor lament. En dan ook kyk hoe ons liturgies lament doelbewus kan inbou. So dis my opinie wat dit aanbetref. Kyk, oor hoe 'n mens dit gaan doen in terme van die liturgiese orde sal mens nou maar moet navorsing doen. Maar die orde sal so opgestel moet word dat daar wel ruimte gemaak word.

Vraag: Want 'n mens kry altyd die idee – kyk bv. na die eerste Sondag in Desember waar daar spesiaal gedink word aan mense wat infected en affected is deur HIV and AIDS, dan

is dit mos maar gewoonlik 'n kers wat aangesteek word. En ek dink regtig ons moet nou bietjie verder beweeg as die kers.

Antwoord: Absoluut. Ons moet 'n bietjie verder beweeg as die kers. Miskien moet ek by sê – in ons gemeente maak ons bietjie meer van lament, veral by begrafnisdienste. Ek dink ons fokus meer daarop as by ons gewone dienste. Dis asof ons lament heeltemal uitsny uit ons eredienste.

Vraag: Interessant was die ander predikant met wie ek gesels het het genoem dat hy die kers gebruik by sy doopliturgie om te lament oor die onbetrokkenheid van ouers in hulle kinders se lewens, die gebrokenheid van die families. En dis die doopouers self wat iets daarvoor sê terwyl die kers aangesteek word.

Answer: Dis baie smart. Ek hou daarvan.

Vraag: En die ander ding wat hy genoem het was dat ons 'n definitiewe behoefte het aan liturgiese verandering maar ons het ook nodig om mense in ons gemeentes te bemagtig hoe om met mense te werk wat gebroke is.

Antwoord: Absoluut

Navorsers: Want ons create nou 'n safe space vir mense in die erediens waar hulle hul broosheid blootstel. En as die erediens verby is? Wat word van daardie mense? Want wat gaan gebeur is dat nou gaan dit die dominee wees wat moet opvolg om daardie mense pastoraal te versorg. Die versoek was nogals vir my heeltemal logies.

Vraag van predikant: Terwyl jy nou gepraat het van die kers het ek net vinnig gewonder wat die rol van simboliek is in jou navorsing. Of jy ook baie klem daarop gaan lê.

Navorsers: Soos my promotor gesê het hy wil nie te veel klem lê op spesifieke dinge nie, soos bv. simboliek of soos bv. liturgie. Dat ek bv. uitgewerkte goed in my tesis moet sit nie. Hy wil eerder net hê ons moet leiding gee in terme van hoe dit gedoen kan word. Maar in terme van simboliek – het ek bietjie daarvoor geskryf. Ons kerk is mos nie eintlik baie gesteld op simboliek nie. Dis nou as ek ons vergelyk met bv. die Anglikaanse kerk. Ons skiet ver te kort. Dis mos nie deel van ons tradisie en kultuur nie. En dalk speel dit ook 'n rol hoekom lament nie so pertinent in ons bediening is nie.

Ons praat dan verder in general oor die simboliek wat nie so baie in ons gemeentes gebruik word nie. En oor ons ervarings in ander kerke.

Predikant: Net so 'n opmerking wat ek wil maak. Ek het laas nagmaal aan ons grootmense gaan bedien. Wat vir my interessant was, was die lament wat ek daar bespeur het. In daardie klein groep. Ek het nog gepreek oor die verlore seun. En ek het nog gesê dat dit nou die gelykenis van die verlore seun is maar dit kon net sowel die gelykenis van 'n liefdevolle Vader wees. En dan het ek God se houding uitgebeeld teenoor die kind wat terug gekom het – daai omhelsing, die goue ring. Ek het bietjie daarop gefokus. En oor hoe ontsettend lief God mense het. Hoe dat hierdie Pa hierdie kind vergewe. Wat vir my interessant was was toe sit en huil daar mense.

Vraag: Meeste van my ervarings rondom die nagmaal is dat daar baie klem gelê word op die feit dat jy nie onvoorbereid aan die tafel moet sit nie. Nou is my vraag: as ek nou deur 'n moeilike tyd in my lewe gaan – as ek nou lament en ek kan my nie reg voorberei nie want ek het hierdie struggle. Nou sit ek in die kerk en die simbole van versoening en heling is op die tafel. En nou oortuig die Gees my, hier is jou heling; hier is jou antwoord vir die wroeging waardeur jy gaan. En nou sê die predikant ek mag nie onvoorbereid aan die tafel sit nie.

Antwoord: Dis amper asof jy uitgesluit word.

Vraag: En ons as liturje kom partykeer so kras voor. Want ek voel in daardie situasie moet 'n moment geskep word vir mense wat daai tyd wil deel wees van die communion om sodoende die heling te kan ontvang. Mense moet kan verstaan dat daar gebrokenheid en heling by die tafel is. Ek verstaan dat ons nie ligsinnig kan wees aan die tafel nie, maar ek voel tog dat daar meer compassion aan die dag gelê kan word vir daardie lament moment. En dis dalk waar predikante kreatief kan werk met die liturgie. Om op daai moment dalk te sê “gemeente, dis dalk die situasie waarin jy jouself bevind. Maar nou hier, ons maak die ruimte”.

Antwoord: En God bied ons die ruimte. Ek dink ons as predikante maak baie foute wat lamenteer aanbetref. Ek dink ons val ook in 'n groef. Jy geniet seker die studie baie. Dit klink baie interessant.

Navorser: Ek geniet die studie.

Ek deel verder met hom persoonlike momente van lamenteer in my eie lewe en hoe dit 'n invloed gehad het op my eie siening van lamenteer.

9.9.3. Uniting Reformed Church – Z

9.9.3.1. Sunday morning service - 04 March 2012

This is my first visit to the congregation⁵¹⁹ this year. I am familiar with the congregation and make a mental note that the minister must introduce me as a researcher this morning.

I arrive at the church at 09h45. Several vehicles are parked in front of the church as well as on the premises. A number of people are also walking to the church. I recognize them as members of our church because they are dressed neatly in the uniform of the women's league as well as the youth league. I am greeted in a friendly manner by a few people that are still outside. I also meet a friend and we talk for a few minutes. Since I know the setup of the church, I go to the vestry immediately. Upon entering, the vestry is a hub of activities. The scribe is informing everyone about the announcements while people also ask the minister for clarity on specific issues. A woman is also receiving ward money. I am greeted very warmly by the minister and all those present.

I am quite fond of this minister and the manner in which he preaches. Must really try and be objective about what I experience during my visits. I also need to remind them that I am here to do research and will not always be present in the vestry as I would also like to observe the congregation before and after services.

The church council consists of five men and eight women this Sunday morning. After reading the announcements the minister takes a few minutes to remind the church council

⁵¹⁹The researcher has been unable to get the 2012 statistical information for this congregation

about the research that I will be doing in the congregation. They all nod in acknowledgement. It also strikes me that there are two small children in the vestry. It seems as if they are there with their grandmothers who are church council members. Their presence does not seem to bother anyone. Some of the church council members still want to talk about issues but the minister reminds them that it is time to start with the service. One of the church council members does a short prayer after which everyone moves into the church. The vestry is adjacent to the church. The church council members go in first and move straight to the stage. The minister walks in last. He stands praying for a few minutes before he goes onto the pulpit. Most of the people have been standing while they were singing and now the rest of the congregation also stands while the church council members take their seats. The minister calls the interpreter to the front. *This is for the sake of the researcher. The interpretation is done from Xhosa to English and Afrikaans.*

He then introduces me to the congregation, reminding them that even though I am not a stranger to the congregation, I am there in my capacity as researcher. He reminds them that the church council has given me permission to do part of my studies there. He expresses the hope that I will have a fruitful time with them.

The minister then formally starts the service with the vatum. After the vatum the congregation sings from the Hosanna, hymn 28 (1). They do not use musical instruments but one of the choir members beats the measure on a small leather pillow. This pillow is hit in a rhythmic manner while the congregation sings together. The people sing with their whole body. They sway back and forth and I can see on their faces that they are enjoying what they are doing.

After the hymn, the minister gives a summary of Romans 13:8-10. The Scripture portion is read in Xhosa and English. Afterwards, the minister alluded to the fact that most of us, if not all, have accounts at shops. This could be our bond, car payment, clothing accounts, etc. These debts could give us sleepless nights because we don't always have the money to pay the monthly installments. And yet we know that we signed agreements to pay monthly installments until the debts are cleared. The apostle Paul made it clear that we

should not have any debt excepting to love one another. We must show love towards each other. The congregation is then invited to move closer to God and confess our sins. Everyone sings hymn 64. After the hymn the church door is closed while we do the confession of guilt and pray. Hymn 122 concludes this section of the liturgy. *I am sure the door is closed during this period to prevent people from moving in and out of the church during this time of confession.*

The minister then announces that the children will be leaving us to go for their Sunday school. But he wants to ask them a question first. The minister steps down from the pulpit and moves to the front of the church while he is interacting with the children. He wants to know from them who has seen a cross. The children eagerly put their hands up and wait to be selected. He then asks one of the children to come to the front and explain to everyone what a cross looks like. The little girl comes to the front and eagerly explains that a cross is made of two pieces of wood. She shows with her hands exactly how the wood fits into each other and that it makes the shape of a cross. The minister praises her for her effort. The congregation sings from the Hosanna, hymn 510 while the children leave the church building.

The Scripture reading for the morning is from the book of Mark 8:27-38. Before the reading takes place, the minister reiterates that we won't hear the Word of God properly if we do not ask the Holy Spirit to guide us. Against this background he then asks one of the congregants to lead us in prayer. It is a woman. *People are not shy to pray and to be part of the liturgy. The experience I have in our church is that it normally takes the minister a couple of times to repeat a request for prayer from the congregation before someone comes to the front. But in this congregation, people are quite eager to be part of the liturgy.* After the prayer the minister reminds us that we are now in a time where we are reminded of the pain and suffering that Jesus had to go through. This time on our church calendar is called Lent. We then sing Hosanna 57.

The minister refers to the fact that the apostle Mark talks about three things and it looks as if they follow each other:

1. Peter believes that Jesus is the Christ;

2. Jesus tells what will happen to him and also what the reason was for his being on earth;
3. If you want to follow Jesus than you must take up your cross.

Mark shows us the way to Jesus. He tells how Jesus healed and fed people. In the portion that was read, we see that Jesus took His disciples aside, so that they could have a private moment and not be disturbed. And He asked them "If the people asked you about me, who do you say I am?" They answered Him in a manner that showed that they knew their church history – John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah or maybe one of the prophets? If you listen to this answer it becomes clear that the disciples were informed about the work of these people that they mentioned.

A brief introduction is then given about John the Baptist, Elijah and Jeremiah. But the turning point comes when Jesus asks His disciples "But you, who do you say I am?" Maybe they scratched their heads, not understanding why He would ask them a question like that since they have been with Him for some time now. But Jesus was persistent. And in the end Peter answered "You are the Christ". And Peter could only come to this conclusion because God revealed it to him.

The minister really keeps the attention of the congregation whilst preaching. He moves with his whole body while talking and if there had not been an interpreter I would have probably have thought that he was very angry with the people from the way that he was addressing them. What is even more interesting is that the interpreter does not lag behind in this "performance". He is also very passionate in his translation. Another interesting thing was that they share the pulpit.

Peter said that Jesus was the Christ. In other words: we are following the servant of God; we are following the anointed One; we are following the One that was called. Christ has a purpose here on earth. God set Him aside and Christ had a purpose. Christ also brings change. The Evangelist Mark makes it clear that the One we are following is Christ, the One that God anointed. Despite our problems, we follow the anointed One. Who do you follow? If we were to ask everyone here this morning, what would their answer be? Peter responded "the one that we follow is Christ, the anointed". *People are actively participating in the sermon. When the minister asks a rhetorical question, people answer in an audible manner.*

Jesus taught them that He would have to suffer. He would be removed by those who know the law. The Pharisees who believe that you must do good deeds to become holy and the Sadducees that do not believe in the resurrection – they will be part of those who remove Jesus. Peter is upset about the words of Jesus and scolded Him for talking in such a manner. However, Jesus reprimanded Peter because he is talking the same language as the world.

Jesus transforms our problems. He came so that we could give our sins to Him. Jesus said “I come to do God’s work”. And Paul said “there is no Greek or Jew anymore. We are one before God. The cross makes us one.” Jesus is the Christ and those who follow Him will be Christians. As Christians, our life should mirror the life of Jesus Christ. You must lose yourself in order to follow Jesus. We must have the characteristics of Jesus. *The minister then starts to sing Hosana 2(2) “I want to be like Jesus” and the congregation sings along. The people are really part of the service and they are not shy to respond during the sermon.*

Those who follow Jesus are servants of Him. We need to know that He is the anointed One, the Son of God, the Messiah. Follow Jesus, He is the King of our lives. Amen.

The minister makes an altar-call and starts to sing “I need thee, oh I need thee”. Almost the whole congregation responds to this altar-call. Colourful cushions are placed on the steps, and people kneel on them while they wait for the minister to pray for them. The minister asks the researcher, as well as another minister in the pews, to come forward and assist him with this session. The people have specific prayer requests and we pray for them according to their needs. The congregants return to the pews after we have prayed for them. The children also return to the church after the Sunday school. After all the grown-ups have been prayed for, the children are invited to come to the front. They stand in a circle in the liturgical area. The ministers also pray for them and bless each one. This altar-call session is closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

The choir sings while the offerings are brought to the front. The big wooden table in front of the pulpit is moved towards the edge of the stairs. Two wooden plates are placed at each corner and people come to the front and place their offerings in these plates. *In other*

URC-congregations, the deacons normally move amongst the pews and collect the offerings. The offering is blessed by one of the church council members while the congregation stands. It is also interesting to see that even though the children have been fairly busy upon their return from Sunday school, they are not moved into an adjacent room. They are part of the proceedings. Their movement does not seem to bother the rest of the people. My observation might not be as objective as I would want it to be because I am also a mother and during a church service you are always very aware of the fact that you have a small child with you and that they might become a nuisance to the rest of the congregation.

After the blessing of the offering the congregation sings Hosanna 291 after which the minister gives the benediction. The church service ends at 12h00.

After the benediction, a gentleman goes to the front and stands at the table. He has a book with him. *I gather that he must be the scribe.* He greets everyone and starts to do the announcements that were approved by the church council in the vestry. The weekly activities of the church are pointed out. Guests are also welcomed at this point. *I cannot follow all the announcements as it is done in Xhosa. So I take this opportunity as well to look around a bit and make some more observations.*

1. SPACE

Building (outside)

The ablution facilities are adjacent to the church. It has been renovated and is very neat. The parsonage is also on the same plot as the church building. However, the minister does not stay there. The plot is neatly enclosed with a boundary wall and metal gates.

Building (inside)

Remnants of Valentine's Day celebrations are still visible inside the church. The hall is well-lit. There are no air conditioners but it is not stuffy in the church. All the windows are open. The pulpit is made of wood and bricks and looks very neat. There is also a notice board in front on which the Scripture reading and hymns are displayed. The church choir sits to the left of the pulpit and the church council to the right. The church hall is segmented into four areas in which wooden chairs are packed neatly, cinema-style.

2. PERSON

The minister is neatly dressed in a black suit with a white long-sleeved shirt and a white tie. All the church council members are neatly dressed in black and white. The men are dressed in the same attire as the minister. Some of them have a white tie on which the church's emblem is displayed. It strikes me that all the women are also wearing the same tie. They have black skirts, white shirts and black jackets.

3. TIME

The service starts at 10h15 even though the official time is 10h00. The service ends at 12h00 after which the announcements are still read. This takes another 30 minutes.

4. SIMBOLS

The Hosanna hymn book. The Bible - Xhosa translation and English translation.

9.9.3.2. Thursday evening service - 05 April 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive at the church at 18h25. Someone is still polishing and buffing the floor while a few other congregants are arranging chairs very quickly. Within five minutes everything is in order and ready for the service. I take my son to the bathroom quickly and upon our return about twenty people are seated already. They are seated randomly and are singing from the Hosanna hymn book. I don't know the hymns but they have a soothing and comforting melody. One lady is beating the rhythm with a small leather cushion that she hits rhythmically. People are now coming into the church in large numbers.

There is a cloth hanging in front of the church with the words "Behold the Lamb John 1:29". There is also cross in the centre behind the pulpit.

2. Ritual Objects

A long table, with a white table cloth, is at the centre of the liturgical area, on the stage. The Holy Communion will be celebrated tonight and the table has been laid with bread and wine.

Hosanna, Bibles.

3. Ritual Time

At 18h40 the church council enters the church from the vestry. We are in the *Holy Week* on our church calendar. The service ends at 20h30.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The proceedings are done mainly in Xhosa and an interpreter is appointed for the sake of the researcher.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister walks in last. The congregation sings while they enter. The church council takes their place on the stage and the minister prays for a few minutes before moving onto the pulpit. The minister is wearing a red stole around his neck. A cross, dove and red flame are embroidered on it.

6. Ritual Action

The minister starts the service with the vatum and after that everyone sings from Hosanna 30. After this we are lead in the confession of guilt. The Scripture reading is from Matthew, the shortened version of the law. The doors are closed. *I can hear the alarm of a vehicle on the outside. It is quite noisy and I wonder whether it is not perhaps my car's alarm that has been triggered.* The minister invites everyone to sing from Hosanna 207 (Jesus, Meester, U het my) verses 1 and 3. After the hymn we confess guilt and then sing *Isivumo Sokholo*⁵²⁰, under the guidance of the church choir.

⁵²⁰ Confession of faith

There are many young people in church tonight. The left wing is almost filled to capacity and six of the nine middle rows are also filled. After the confession of faith we sing “ewe Nkosi” / *Yes Lord*. The doors are then opened again.

Up to this point all the proceedings took place in Xhosa. However, I was able to follow the proceedings because of a very basic understanding of the language. An interpreter now goes to the front and is tasked with translating the sermon.

We read from John 19:1-8 and Corinthians 5:7 & 8. After the Scripture reading the minister refers to the fact that today would have been the trial of Jesus. As Christians we observe this week as a holy week. On Monday we were reminded how Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. On Tuesday He was arrested and we need to ponder on the manner in which His arrest took place. We are reminded of the words of Jesus to Peter when He asked Peter to put his sword away. On Wednesday Jesus had to appear in two different courts. And today, Thursday, Jesus will appear in Pilate's court. He appears before Annas who wants Jesus to be found guilty of all charges. Caiaphas was acting as high priest during this time. Jesus is interrogated but He does not answer. This reminds us of Isaiah 53 where we are told that Jesus did not open His mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. Jesus had to die because He called himself the son of God. Pilate was the governor at this time and he made it very clear that he could not find any fault with Jesus.

The children are quite noisy and some of them are also crying. But the sermon continues.

The Jews were standing on the side because they did not want to become unclean before Passover. The minister explains how Jesus was dressed and how the people were mocking him. Pilatus was sy hande in onskuld. Hy sê “hier is ‘n mens”. Volgens die Romeinse wet is Jesus onskuldig. Gee hom vir die Jode!! Jesus was geklee in ‘n koninklike kleed.

Die Jode wou hê Jesus moes sterf, maar hulle wou hom nie self doodmaak nie. Hulle volg hul wette en het nie mag om iemand dood te maak nie. (*predikant lê klem op hierdie paradoks en wys daarmee hoe mense se harte is*). Pilatus was bang vir die mense. Hy draai om en vra vir Jesus vanwaar hy is? Pilatus was korrupt. Herodus het die Bybel geken. Pilatus en Herodus was vyande, maar het nou skielik vriende geword. He contextualized this to our everyday life when it becomes clear that two people are not friends, but suddenly – out of the blue – they become good friends.

Voor Jesus se dood moes Hy die legal process deurmaak in vier howe en hulle almal vind Hom onskuldig!!

Wie is die Jesus wat ons volg? Die dood van Jesus Christus was 'n beplanning van God maar die uitvoering daarvan sou deur die mense gebeur. Klem word gelê op hoe die Israeliete die paasfees gevier het: ongesuurde brood, slag van 'n skaap, bloed – wat het in Egipte gebeur.

Jesus as offer vir ons as mense. Hy alleen het al ons sondes gedra. (*daar is baie beaming tydens preek*). Ons paasfees is die bloed van Jesus Christus, nie 'n skaap of bees nie. Daar is 'n mens wat sondaar geword het.

A glass breaks but the minister is not fazed by this and continues as if nothing has happened. Een van die kerkraadslede gaan vorentoe en tel die glasstukke op.

Aanvaar dat Jesus Christus koning van u lewe is. Amen

Hosanna 161 v1, 3, last

Liturgy of Holy Communion from the URCSA liturgy book (Xhosa translation).

Hosanna 163 (“I do believe”) – after the prayer in the liturgy book.

The narrative of the institution

Hosanna 163 v 4 – people stand while singing

Minister goes to table and ask church council to join him. One man and three women (including the ministers wife)

People have entered the church unobtrusively during the sermon. Left wing and middle wing are now full.

The liturgy in the book is alternated with singing.

Hosanna 164 v 1,2

Greeting of peace. Congregation sings “I need thee, oh I need thee” spontaneously while greeting each other. Minister walks through whole congregation and gives each one a “peace hug”. *This is not done in other congregations. Normally only the people closest to you are greeted. And this takes only a minute or two. But this tradition of greeting everyone gives such a peaceful atmosphere.* People are singing patiently, while waiting for the minister to take his place again. Continue with liturgy. *The doors are closed.*

We sing Hosanna 166 while bread and wine are distributed. I am seated in the pews but one the church council insists that I be served by the minister in front. Before I could go to the front, the minister approaches me and serves me there in the pulpit.

After celebrating the Holy Communion, the minister still talks about the crucifixion of Jesus. It comes to his attention then that he forgot to serve someone wine. The congregation bursts out in laughter. There is a very relaxed atmosphere in the church.

Information about the Passover weekend is then provided.

The congregation sings Hosanna 159 while the minister goes back to the pulpit and the people to the pews. The wine glasses are also collected.

Benediction

9.9.3.3. Sunday morning service – 26 August 2012

1. Ritual Space

At 10h05 there are approximately 25 people present. People are still arriving. Very cold this morning and it looks like it is going to rain. People are dressed very warmly. The choir leads the congregation in hymn singing while we wait for the church council and the minister to come from the vestry. Liturgical area is the same. There is a CYM conference 2012 banner across the cross at the back of the pulpit.

2. Ritual Objects

Hosanna, Bibles.

3. Ritual Time

The service starts just before 10h20 and ends at 11h40. After the benediction the announcements are done.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

Most of the proceedings are done in Xhosa. A translator is appointed to translate the proceedings from Xhosa to English and/or Afrikaans.

5. Ritual Identity

Just before 10h20 the church council enters and one of the members go onto the pulpit. One of the other church council members comes to the researcher and asks her to go and sit in front. However, she explains to the member that she would prefer to sit where she is in order to do the observation unobtrusively.

6. Ritual Action

Votum

Hosanna 219 verse 1-5

Service of guilt and confession

Hosanna 207

The minister is not present today. The church council member asks one of the congregants to pray.

Scripture reading is taken from Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Cornelius's house.

Hosanna 265

From this point on a translator is called to the front to translate the rest of the service. The researcher and the rest of the congregation are welcomed to the service. The preacher gives a bit of background about Acts. Kornelius had a significant position. He was the head of the soldiers. The Lord appeared to him via an angel. God showed him through a vision that He was satisfied with him. God then gave a command that he must go to the house of Simon Peter. Kornelius sent men to Peter. Peter was praying. He was also hungry and he got a vision in the form of a blanket with an assortment of foods. The preacher now just tells the story of the visit of the three men. Peter went to Kornelius's house. He knelt before Peter. Peter told him about his vision. God does not show partiality. He accepts those who fear Him, regardless of which nation you belong to. Jesus has risen for everyone! Our sins are forgiven through the power of God, not through our own power.

The preacher and the translator are getting into action – loud voices, body movements, etc. At certain points their voices overlap and it is quite difficult to follow the message.

Communion and acceptance among people even though they may seem different. God does not make a difference between people. He accepts all who believe in Him. Don't write people off just because they are not the same as you. Congregation audibly agrees with this statement. Amen.

Congregation now has a chance to pray. Woman from church choir starts off. Then another woman prays. *The congregants are really not shy to pray out loud in the congregation.* After these two prayers the congregation sings "Our Father". Choir then offers a hymn while the congregation bring their offers to the front. The researcher is asked to do the benediction.

After the announcements the church council and the researcher go into the vestry for the closing prayer.

People are still chatting with each other and a relaxed atmosphere is in the church. When I leave the church grounds at 12h20, there are still a few people outside the building, chatting to each other.

People in attendance: 34 female, 13 male and 7 children

9.9.3.4. Sunday morning service – 30 September 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrived at 10h10 and am late (completely misjudged the traffic). Congregants are singing joyfully from Hosanna hymn book. They are being led by the church choir. The minister's wife comes to greet me. She also wants to know if I am comfortable where I am seated. The church council is still busy in the vestry. However, there is no mood of impatience amongst the congregants.

2. Ritual Objects

A purple cloth is hanging against the front wall with the words "Behold the Lamb John 1:29" embroidered on it. Behind the pulpit is a wooden cross with a banner across it ("CYM

Conference 2012"). A wooden notice board is also on the right hand side of the pulpit – against the wall. The hymns and Scripture portion for the day are displayed (Hag 2; Hymns 295, 28 and 76). A cloth is also draped on the front of the pulpit with the words “Uthixo unathi” – “God is with us”. There is a big table with three chairs in front of the pulpit. The table is covered with a white tablecloth. Two smaller tables are on either side of the pulpit. They are covered with a white cloth and black centre piece. There is a candle on each table but they are not lit. On the concrete pillars in the passages there is a slogan – “Let us practice what we preach in our community”. It is written on colourful pieces of paper. *I wonder whether this was a theme of a conference. Maybe the CYM conference that is also advertised in front of the church.*

3. Ritual Time

Only a few people were present when I arrived. It is now 10h18 and the church is almost full. We are still waiting for the church council. At 10h20 the church council enters. The worship service concludes at 12h15.

4. Ritual Sound and Language

The proceedings are taking place in Xhosa and being translated into English and/or Afrikaans for the benefit of the researcher.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister is neatly dressed in a black suit, white shirt and white tie. He does not have his toga on. A woman from the church council leads the congregation for the first part of the service.

6. Ritual Action

Hosanna 295, Scripture reading from Deut 5 – the law, Hosanna 229.

The Scripture reading for the day is from Haggai 2:1-9. The congregation is then asked to pray. A Xhosa and English translation of the text is read. *They always show hospitality towards visitors. And I believe this is done for the benefit of the researcher.* The church council member then continues with the sermon – even though the minister is present. *This is quite*

extraordinary. In the coloured congregations a minister is expected to preach all the time. Congregants complain bitterly if an elder preaches when the minister is not present. It is quite rare that a minister would be present in the congregation, but that an elder is given the chance to preach. This would most probably happen only if the minister is on leave and is just attending church as an ordinary member.

Meditation:

Let's say thank you to God who is in charge of time! As I was preparing for this sermon, I remembered about a book that I always carry in my bag. The title of the book is "*Waarom, Daarom!*". It's in this book that I read about Haggai 2. He encouraged the builders, he spoke to them. Haggai only has two chapters. It encourages people. The Lord spoke to the people through Haggai. People were saying that the time was not right to come. I was confused by these words. But God says is it time to stay in your houses while the temple is empty? Look at your ways! You ploughed big but harvested little. You drink but your thirst is not quenched! Even though you are working, your earnings are as if it is put in a bag with holes.

As African people, if we don't see our money, when we are working, we go to our places of origin. We make traditional beer and sing a song "*Why my forefathers have you forsaken me?*". We then have a consultation with the elders. After the consultation we go back to work. But things just get worse. Why? Because I did not look at God's way as I was instructed by my parents. I did things my own way. Let's look at God's ways! Let's look into our lives and see if God is there. When we get our salary, do we first go to the shops and then afterwards we give our offerings? Do we give the change to God?

God does not judge us! He said "Be strong, I'm with you". He encourages us. God brought His people out of Egypt and He also made a covenant with them. God did not change. But we, we need to look at our ways again! This chapter encourages us but God also says "All stumbling blocks in this house make my work not to go forward – I will destroy it!".

All of us are chosen by God and we have different talents. Some give offerings and others don't. Haggai says don't be afraid to do the work that God has told you to do. God will not forsake us. Let us look at our ways! God knows everything! May God bless us all who are here today, now and forever more. Amen.

The preacher asks another woman to pray. This lady gets very emotional during her prayer. People are agreeing with what she is praying. *I wish I could understand the full extent of her prayer because I am sure there are many elements of lament in it.* The congregation then sings "Our Father" in conclusion of this section of the service.

There are only a few men present today (14 men, 50 woman and 10 children). Offerings are taken to the front while the choir lead us in song. The minister is asked to do the benediction. Before he does that, he first informs the congregation about the General Synod that will take place in Namibia from the following day. He explains the background pertaining to the discussions about Belhar. He then asks that we should use time now to pray, as a church, for the proceedings of the General Synod. He then concludes with the benediction.

Hosanna 349

Announcements at 12h05. Children become a bit restless and are encouraged to be patient. The minister, church council and researcher go to the vestry for final conclusion and prayer.

9.9.3.5. Sunday morning service - 14 October 2012

1. Ritual Space

I arrive just before 09h00 and there are only a few vehicles parked in front of the church building. But this is quite normal because most people are walking. There are only a few people present in the church. The choir is leading us in singing while we wait for the minister and church council. The Sunday service normally starts at 10h00 but today we are suppose to start at 09h00 because there is a Presbytery choir festival at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town in the afternoon. All congregations in the presbytery were

requested to start their services earlier this morning to allow people enough time to attend the festival in the afternoon as well.

2. Ritual Objects

Hosanna, Bibles.

3. Ritual Time

The church council and the minister enter the church and we start at 09h20 and end at 10h45.

4. Ritual Sounds and Language

The service is conducted in Xhosa.

5. Ritual Identity

The minister is sitting on stage with the rest of the church council members. Some of the church council members are also part of the choir. They are dressed very neatly in black and white. An elder takes care of the first part of the liturgy. *Or is this the preacher of the day as well?*

6. Ritual Action

The votum and blessing are done and then a reading from the Law in Exodus 20:1-17. People are still arriving during the singing of the first hymn Hosanna 28(2). The first part of the liturgy is done in Xhosa, but I am able to follow most of what is said. The children are sitting quietly in their seats. They have an allocated area next to the choir.

The confession of faith is done after which we sang Hosanna 159. We sing all seven verses and people are swaying rhythmically while we are singing. They are really enjoying themselves while singing. *It does not happen often in our church – the Afrikaans speaking congregations – that we would sing all seven verses of a hymn. Mostly only four or five verses will be sung. And in many instances people will not be happy to sing so many verses. But I have observed that in the Xhosa-speaking congregations, all verses of hymns are normally sung. And the people are very much present, in voice and body, when they are singing. Sometimes they will even move*

to the front of the church, as a congregation, while they are singing! And then they will conclude the song by humming "Amen Amen" and then they repeat the final verse.

The Scripture reading comes from Luke 1:39-45. It is now 09h50 and people are still entering the church. Some of them were probably under the impression that the service started at 10h00. However, during my observations here, I have seen that many people arrive late and it is quite "normal" to have people arriving a full hour after the service has started.

We sing Hosanna 47 and then the preacher is introduced. She is a final year theological student that is working in the church under the guidance of the minister and the church council. She greets everyone and says we will be looking at Mary's visit to Elizabeth this morning. *It looks as if there won't be any interpretation this morning so I will have to listen very carefully to be able to get the gist of the message. The Xhosa modules that I did a couple of years ago will be tested thoroughly this morning.* The focus question this morning is "How are we touched by Jesus Christ in our daily lives". Mary visited Elizabeth and stayed with her for some time. Today, when we get visitors we immediately feel the pressure on our finances because we now have extra mouths to feed. And we are quick to complain about the cost of living that is so high. The same was true for Elizabeth. However, she opened her house to Mary and she looked after her. Focus was also placed on the saying "Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu". We need to accommodate people despite the cost of living. We need to show people love and empathy when they knock on our doors. As Christians, we should not hide behind the cost of living, when we are asked to do good in our communities.

The preacher is very low-keyed and soft-spoken in comparison with her male counterparts (in terms of "performance"). However, people are agreeing with what she is saying. I mostly hear the voices of woman who are in agreement.

The sermon is done by 10h10 and the preacher asks an elder to pray. The choir then sings while the offerings are taken to the front. The children are now quite noisy for a few moments but it all becomes quiet again fairly quickly. At 10h25 the benediction is done by

the minister. After the benediction announcements are done and everything is concluded by 10h45.

I go into the vestry with the minister and church council to close the service formally. They thank me for my presence and express the hope that I have enjoyed the service. When we leave the vestry people are still chatting in the church and they don't seem to be in a hurry to go home. The preacher asks for a lift to Stellenbosch and we leave the church premises at 11h00. On our way to Stellenbosch I speak to her about the sermon. I tell her what I heard and she confirms that my understanding of the language was correct. She wanted to focus on our actions as Christians when we are supposed to be hospitable to people, especially if we take our financial situation into consideration. We then chat about our studies and the challenges that we are facing.

9.9.3.6. Holy Communion service by researcher 21 October 2012

Notes are taken by the assistant researcher. The service is conducted by the researcher. There is an atmosphere of "community" in this church. People seem to be accustomed to sharing their suffering in the congregation. People assent to the questions which are posed by the researcher. If someone is hurt outside in our community, can that person come into this church and share their pain? (Are people acknowledging their own needs? Do they stand accused?)

[Gevoel van gemeenskap. [nie vreemd om leed (in gemeente) te deel nie]

Beaming op die Q: As iemand daar buite seerkry, kan hy/ sy hier inkom en hier voor kom vertel wat sy/ hy deurgemaak het (en die seer deel)?

(Erkenning van behoefte? Reeds in die harte van die mense?)(Beskuldiging?)

*Min mans teenwoordig. Baie vroue, jongmense en kinders, maar min mans. [*Few men present. Many women, young people and children*]*

Uitnodiging vir gebede/[*invitation for prayer*]:

Eerste gebed is van 'n man. Daarna 'n trane-gebed van 'n jong vrou! [heilige moment]
(bevestiging van behoefte vir weeklaag in die liturgie?)

*[The first prayer is done by a man. After that 'n young woman prays and becomes very emotional.
Holy moment – definite confirmation that there is a need for lament in the liturgy]*

Uitnodiging vir deelname/[invitation for participation in liturgy]:

vinnige reaksie. Man 1e. *[Quick reaction to the invitation. A man responded first]*

- anointing: heilige moment... [salwing van pastoriepaar veral goed]

[The researcher anoints participants, including the minister and his wife. Feels like a holy moment.]

Algemene gevoel dat simboliek en rituele meer meaningful in die swart gemeenskap
(anders as by twee ander V GK-gemeentes) is.

Gevoel van warmte en waardering vir die bekendstelling/ insluiting van die simboliek
(veral kerse en salwing)

[Personal views of the assistant:

*General feeling is that the symbolism and ritual were more meaningful in the black congregation
(than was the experience in the other two URC congregations). There was a feeling of warmth and
appreciation for the introduction of the symbols – especially the candles and the anointing.]*

People in attendance (approximately): 15 men; 40 woman, 30 children; 20 youth.

9.9.3.7. Informal interview with the minister – 14 October 2012

Vraag: Hoe lank is ds nou al in die gemeente?⁵²¹

Antwoord: It's now 5 years.

⁵²¹ This interview was conducted at the minister's home. His mother tongue is Xhosa, but he speaks Afrikaans very well. The interview is conducted in Afrikaans and English. We were also invited for lunch and it is thus a very relaxed atmosphere in which this interview was conducted. The student who accompanied me this morning, and who also assisted with the questionnaires, is also present and also took part in the conversation.

Vraag: Wat is u ervaring in die gemeente in terme van – gaan hulle op hulle eie aan of het hulle constant checking-up nodig?

Antwoord: Ja, hulle het nog checking nodig. Elke keer moet mens maar bietjie kyk wat hulle doen. Hulle het nog baie leiding nodig.

Vraag: So dis maar nog baie die “herder-kudde” model?

Antwoord: Ja, ja.

Vraag: En kan ‘n mens maklik nuwe goed introduce? Of sukkel hulle?

Antwoord: Ja, hulle sukkel nogals bietjie om te change. As jy sekere goed wil introduce, dan moet jy maar eers baie praat om ‘n deurbraak te maak. Anders sukkel jy nou baie.

Vraag: So hulle is eintlik konserwatief?

Antwoord: Hulle is konserwatief. Ek dink een van die redes is dat hierdie gemeente is opgebou deur mense wat van verskillende kontekste afkom. Party kom van die Oos-Kaap, andere kom weer van ander plekke. En dan is daar ook ‘n sendelingagtergrond. So dit gaan maar moeilik vir verandering.

Vraag: Ten opsigte van my tema, lament. Ek het nou al ‘n paar keer ervaar dat die gemeente is nie styf nie. Ek was nou al ‘n paar keer by wanneer Mfundisi call-outs gemaak het en waar daar vir elkeen gebid was; dit waarvoor die persoon vra. So dit wat ek vanoggend gepreek het, wat is Mfundisi se ervaring?

Antwoord: Ja, dis nou een van die dinge wat ek sien. Meeste van die mense is vasgevang in probleme om hulle uit te nooi na vore en te vra waarvoor ek moet bid – hulle waardeer dit baie. ‘n Mens sê nie vir jou wat die eintlike probleem is nie maar wanneer jy uitkom dan bel hulle en sê “reverend baie dankie, ek waardeer dit. Ek was so in die probleem”. Hulle vertel eers vir jou van die probleme nadat hulle die uitkomst gesien het. Maar hulle sal nie oop wees om te sê ek het so ‘n probleem nie; ‘n familie probleem of ‘n finansiële probleem nie.

Student: 'n mens dink nie altyd daaraan nie, maar dit gaan juis oor die feit dat die space gecreate word. Daar word ruimte gemaak vir sulke goed. As daar nie ruimte gemaak word nie sal 'n mens ook nie weet nie.

Dominee: Ja, mens sal nie weet nie.

Vraag: My ervaring nou met die gemeentes wat ek besoek het is dat lament in die meeste gevalle in die gebed geadresseer word. Maar nie fisies dat predikante of predikers wat preek daaroor – wat vir mense verduidelik waarom dit gaan en dat ons dit kan doen; dis wat die volk van ouds ook gedoen het. Ek tel dit meestal in gebede op. Ek weet nie of dit ook Mfundisi se ervaring is nie?

Antwoord: Ja, ja. Dit is so Marlene. Ek stem saam met jou. 'n Mens kry dit nou baie by die gebed. Daar is ook sekere tye wanneer 'n mens iemand hoor bid vir spesifieke dinge. Mense praat nie maklik oor hulle probleme nie, maar hulle sal daaroor bid in die kerk. Dan sal ek na die tyd na hulle toe gaan en sê “ek het gehoor jy het oor hierdie dinge gebid. Hoe gaan dit nou met jou?” Ek moet ook baie die konteks van mense se gebede lees. Want soms bid hulle dalk vir hulle man en wil nie in die teenwoordigheid van almal laat blyk wat die probleem is nie. So na die gebed maak ek 'n opvolg en dan vertel die persoon vir my wat die probleem was. Ek dink aan die een kant het dit ook te doen met die tradisie. 'n Swart vrou kan nie die probleem van haar man voor ander mense praat nie.

Navorsers: Jy kan nie die huis se goed praat nie...

Dominee: So dis my ervaring dat mense eers self hulle probleme wil uitsorteer en dan sal hulle jou daarvan vertel.

Navorsers: Maar het dit nie ook baie te doen met die liturgie in ons kerk nie? Behalwe die sosiale tradisie het ons kerk tog ook sy eie tradisie.

Dominee: Ja, so die liturgie van ons kerk is eintlik ook 'n bietjie toe.

Navorsers: Yes.

Dominee: Dit gee nie daardie ruimte nie.

Navorsers: Kyk byvoorbeeld na die nagmaalsformulier. Die nagmaalsformulier sê jy mag nie onvoorbereid aan die tafel sit nie. Nou kom iemand vanoggend kerk toe en die persoon

is nie voorbereid nie. Die persoon is besig om te lament oor iets in sy of haar lewe. Die persoon gaan deur 'n moeilike tyd. Maar nou kom ek as 'n prediker en ek gee nou die tipe boodskap wat ek vanoggend gegee het; dat jy met jou gebrokenheid na die tafel toe kan kom; na Jesus toe kan kom want in daardie spasie kan jy gesond gemaak word. *Die predikant se foon lui en hy vra verskoning en antwoord dit gou. Ek hoor hy sê aan die persoon dat hy hom môre sal bel want hy is besig om te werk.*

Nou sê ek as prediker jy kan met jou gebrokenheid na die tafel toe kom en hier kom kry jy heling vir jou siel. En dan gaan ek nou na die liturgieboek toe. En dan sê die boek nou dat niemand onvoorbereid aan die tafel mag sit nie. Maar daar word nie space gemaak – daar word nie gesê “my broer en my suster, as u nie vir u voorberei het nie, maar die Gees van die Here het nou met u gepraat, kom ons gee mekaar geleentheid; kom ons raak stil en ons berei vir onself voor.” Ons gee nie daardie ruimte nie.

Dominee: Ja, ons gee nie die kans dat mense kan voorberei nie.

Student: Ja, almal weet daar is spanning in die gemeente. Ek was al by 'n bediening waar die predikant die ruimte geskep het na aanleiding van die teks “as jy iets teen jou broer het...”. Om nagmaal met iemand te gebruik is tog heling vir my en vir jou.

Navorsers: En veral as alle partye teenwoordig is, hoekom kan dit nie gedoen word nie?

Nou sit die persone net in die banke en hulle neem net nie nagmaal nie.

Dominee: Weet jy wat, toe ek nog in Port Elizabeth was – hier het ek dit nog nie gedoen nie – voordat ons nagmaal neem dan gun ons tyd vir mense om met mekaar te praat. Daar was byvoorbeeld twee jong meisies wat groot probleme gehad het en dit het die gemeente plat geslaan. Ek het met altwee gepraat voor die tyd en gevra of hulle gewillig sal wees om heling te ontvang. En hulle was gewillig. Die Woensdag voor die nagmaal het ek en my vrou saam met die twee meisies gebid. Die Sondag is dit toe nagmaal. Toe vra ek hulle of hulle nie wil demonstreer die ervaring wat hulle gehad het nie. So voor die nagmaal het ek gevra of daar iemand is wat wil nagmaal gebruik maar bietjie ongemaklik voel. En verduidelik dat ons mekaar se voete kan was as teken dat ons vuil is maar dat ons skoon word deur Jesus. Daardie twee meisies het sommer vorentoe gespring. And they reconciled with one another. And the congregation was so shocked because they were aware of the issue between these girls. They told the congregation that they have been at

loggerheads with one another but now they are reconciled. I try to do it in this congregation but here the context is just different.

Researcher: And I think that is the challenge for our church. If we as religious leaders do not think about lament and reintroduce it...

Minister: Who is going to do it?

Researcher: So I think there needs to be a change of heart. And I'm not saying – ons moet net heeltyd huil voor die Here nie. And we must just be despondent. That's not what I'm saying. I'm looking at lament in liturgy against the backdrop of healing and hope. And I am not saying that lament is not present at all in our church. That's why I say it's the "re-discovery and the re-introduction" of lament.

Minister: But it's not clear. Lament is there but it is not clear.

Student: Die eerste nota wat ek gemaak het vandag was die idee van gemeenskap. Jou verduideliking van van gemeenskap was baie mooi vandag. Jy het gesê kan iemand wat daar buitekant seergekry het hiernatoe kom – is daar heling hier. Want baie keer kom mense kerk toe en hulle gaan huis toe net soos hulle gekom het. Want ek kom en ek sit net by my kant; Ma en Pa praat nie met mekaar nie; kind praat nie met Ma en Pa nie. So aan die einde van die dag wat was die betekenis van die diens en die sang? Jy kom elke keer net met jouself en jy gaan weer net so met jouself huis toe. So dit het nogals vandag vir my uitgestaan.

Navorsers: Een van die predikante met wie ek gesels het het ook gesê dat lament is daar maar dis nie sigbaar nie. Ons moet werk dat dit sigbaar kan raak en die ander ding wat hy voorgestel het is dat ons sal mense moet "empower" om met hierdie mense te kan werk wat in die safe space inkom en kom deel.

Minister: Yes, we have to look at the after-care as well.

Navorsers: Ons het nodig om mense op te lei sodat hulle saam met hierdie persone 'n pad kan loop.

Student: Ek dink dit gaan ook oor die communal space. Jy het gepraat van hoe julle dit waarneem in gebede. Ek weet van gemeentes waar mense nie eers meer biduur toe kom nie. Want kom bid ek, kom lê ek my hart voor die Here, dan praat die mense daaroor. So mense doen dit net nie meer nie. Dis eintlik 'n siekte in die kerk want daar is nie meer 'n safe space nie.

Minister: I strongly support the idea that we support the ministers. When you share with your colleagues what you are doing in your congregation then they just say it won't work in their congregation. Look at our congregation. The youth has been in this church for very long but they were inactive. En hulle was afhanklik van 3 families. En as een van daardie families nie in die kerk was nie dan gaan daar niks aan nie. En dit het veroorsaak dat daar nie groei was nie. Daar was geen groei nie. Alles het stilgestaan. Last year, for the first time, the youth organised themselves. They decided to donate a microwave to the church. And this year they have other projects going. So they are working now. And the reason for this is that there has been a change in leadership

Researcher: So things are changing, although it takes time.

Minister: Yes, they are changing. I am very much interested in the fact that you say we must create space. I like to come always with something new. So next week we have a "story-telling" event. We are just going to sit and listen to people who share their stories. We want them to tell us what they have been through for a year – from last year October until this year October. How did you see the power of God at work in your life. And people are enjoying the communion. Last year we finished at about 4 o'clock. So we are creating a space. Jy weet, daar is baie mense wat in die gemeente seer gekry het so nou kry hulle die kans om te sê waar hulle seer gekry het. So I fully agree with you about creating space for people.

Researcher: I think it might be easier for you in your tradition because you are much more relaxed about time.

Minister: Laughs.. Yes, we are more relaxed.

Our discussion then revolves around how we grew up and what we were allowed to do on Sundays. While we talk we also share lunch.